

Kingsholm 1891-2 to 1951-2

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DIAMOND JUBILEE OF THE TWICKENHAM OF THE WEST COUNTRY

TO-MORROW WILL MARK THE ADVENT OF ANOTHER GREAT MILESTONE IN THE ILLUSTRIOUS AND PROUD HISTORY OF KINGSHOLM RUGBY GROUND – GLOUCESTER’S TWICKENHAM OF THE WEST AND ONE OF THE BEST IN BRITAIN.

When the whistle shrills for the kick-off in the customary opening-of-season clash between Gloucester and Lydney, it will, coincidentally, signalise the start of Gloucester Rugby Football Club’s 60th year on the now famous enclosure.

These 60 years, studded with unforgettable examples of triumph over adversity ... of courage and initiative on and off the field ... of rousing battles and thrilling victories interwoven with heart-breaks and set-backs ... have earned for Kingsholm and the Club an ineffaceable place in the history of rugby.

Sixty years ago a small band of pioneers stood on the open spaces that was once Kingsholm and dreamed of building one of the finest rugby stadiums in the West.

The path was not easy. Many vicissitudes were experienced. Many disappointments and blows were endured.

BUT IN THE END THE DREAM OF THE PIONEERS AND WORTHY GENERATIONS OF SUCCESSORS CAME TRUE.

Kingsholm, the West’s own Twickenham, is not only one of the finest grounds but one of the greatest rugby bastions in the country.

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 Grym 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.

Heavily in debt

Until 1900 covered and open stand accommodation on Kingsholm was very limited.

But selection of the ground for an international match against Wales prompted the Club Committee to embark on a scheme to build stands practically all round the ground.

IT WAS EXPECTED THAT RECEIPTS FROM AN ESTIMATED CROWD OF 20,000 WOULD MORE THAN COVER THE COST, BUT UNFORTUNATELY THE BIG CROWD DID NOT MATERIALISE. THE WORK ON THE GROUND HAD COST £1,600; THE GATE RECEIPTS CAME TO £984.

Though the Rugby Union made an allowance, the Club was left heavily in debt a debt which was not wiped out for nearly 20 years!

The Club's spacious gymnasium was officially opened before the first match of the record-making 1905-6 season.

Many improvements were afterwards effected and amenities added.

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.

Another great milestone in the history of Kingsholm was season 1937-38.

The famous enclosure was then virtually acquired by the club – and the dream of the 1891 pioneers to secure it as a permanent home for rugby was realised.

This achievement was in itself a magnificent tribute to the unselfish, untiring efforts of a long line of officials and committee members.

Further improvements to Kingsholm were carried out during the summer of 1949. Stand were repainted and new concrete steps laid at Deans Walk end and in front of the gymnasium to give hundreds of spectators a better view.

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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 60th 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

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PRAISE FROM THE PRESIDENT

THIS IS SURELY THE TIME TO ACKNOWLEDGE WITH GRATEFUL THANKS THE FORESIGHT OF THOSE RUGGER ENTHUSIASTS IN GLOUCESTER WHO IN 1891 SECURED KINGSHOLM GROUND, AND TO THOSE OFFICIALS AND MEMBERS WHO, AS YEARS WENT ON, BOUGHT AND PAID FOR IT SO THAT IT BECAME THE HOME OF THE GLOUCESTER FOOTBALL CLUB FOR ALL TIME.

Not only have they served the Club but they have served the boys of Gloucester, giving them the opportunity by using their own efforts, of playing for their town and club, which should be the ambition of every boy in Gloucester who takes up the grand old game of amateur Rugger.

The future of the game has never been more promising than to-day. The Rugby Union and its Clubs have maintained and secured that it shall be a game for amateurs, and for those who love the game for itself.

I am sure officials and members of Gloucester Club, with their fine traditions secured by their fine home at Kingsholm, will see to it that the boys of Gloucester and district are given every opportunity to play the game and play it in the right spirit.

So I send on behalf of Rugby Union and its 1,300 Clubs in membership, congratulations to Gloucester on its fine record since its formation in 1873.

For providing so many players to represent England in International matches; the grand games it has provided for Clubs in their fixture list; for the great contribution made to the game itself; and finally for possessing so magnificent a home as Kingsholm.

H. CLEAVER
(President E.R.F.U.)

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Well-known figures, whose names have for generations been synonymous with rugby football not only in Gloucester but throughout a much wider field, turn back the pages of memory, explain why ...

I LIKE TO REMEMBER ...

SOME OF THE BEST YEARS OF MY LIFE

By Tom Voyce, famous England international

THE THRILLS OF VICTORY AND DEFEAT ... HERCULEAN BATTLES AGAINST ODDS ... THE SUBTLE CHANGE OF TACTICS WHICH TIPPED THE SCALES ... THE ROARS WHICH HAVE SHAKEN KINGSHOLM TO SIGNALISE AN OUTSTANDING FEAT AND, ABOVE ALL, THE GRAND COMRADESHIP WHICH SHINES LIKE A JEWEL IN THE HISTORY OF GLOUCESTER RUGBY.

These are but a few of many corners in my own particular treasure-house of memories of never-to-be-forgotten years on and off the field of play.

To reminisce is, of course, one of the joys of a rugger man, particularly when he has put away his boots and jerseys and has to confine himself to ... memories.

Of all games, rugger must be the greatest of all for cementing those friendships which are so valuable in later life.

And my wonderful experiences in Gloucester R.F.C. have provided me with some of the happiest days of my life.

First game for Glo'ster

I vividly remember the first game I played for Gloucester. That was in 1920 when I was selected as a wing threequarter.

But eventually, owing to Tart Hall crying off one day, I played forward and was immediately selected for Major Stanley's side – the first step to County and England caps.

I have so many memories that it is difficult to select those which call for special mention.

But I like especially to recall our unbeaten home record for seasons 1920-3-4 and our defeat of the invincible Newport fifteen.

I remember great games against Bristol, Cardiff and other fine sides – and one game at Kingsholm which gives me a laugh to this day.

“I'll report you”

There was also the occasion when the referee was going to take some drastic action. That great tactician, George Holford, immediately shouted to me: “I'll report you to the committee next week!” and the astonished referee said: “Play on, men!”

Of many fine men I met, I like to remember the grand play of “Father” Dix and Tom Millington (what a pity they played at the same time as Kershaw and Davies!); That great warrior Frank Ayliffe and that fine wing artiste, Kit Tanner.

AND IN MORE RECENT TIMES, GORDON HUDSON, WHO HAS DONE SO MUCH FOR THE CLUB AND WHO, HAD HE STAYED IN THE CENTRE, WOULD, I THINK, HAVE PLAYED MANY TIMES FOR ENGLAND.

And I treasure the memories of scores of others who played noble parts in bringing glory to Gloucester rugby.

But I have sad memories, too ... of the sorrow caused by the deaths of Stanley Bayliss and Sid Brown ... and the dismay when the big stand was engulfed by fire.

Looking back over 78 years of the club’s existence, no one can deny that Gloucester R.F.C. has a proud and magnificent record.

And its future – aided by a background of splendid traditions – by resolution to continue playing the open game – and with continued support of local clubs – is in my view very bright indeed.

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This hallowed ground, the best in the world

By D. R. GENT, Rugby Editor “Sunday Times”

TO ME, KINGSHOLM IS THE BEST CLUBGROUND IN THE COUNTRY; YES, AND IN THE WORLD! THERE IT WAS THAT I BEGAN MY PLAYING DAYS IN FIRST-CLASS FOOTBALL IN 1903.

Stories of what great games had been played on “the Spa” I used to hear from dear old “Tommy” Bagwell and George Romans – both Rugby mentors of mine – and that keen enthusiast and honoured citizen, Alderman S. J. Gillett, still my close friend.

But that was past history. The live Kingsholm ground was for seven years part of my being, and has ever since been the core of the memories of my active playing days, which have been revived at least once every year by visits to the grand old City.

Again I say it – this is the ground, a fair nut for everybody with no idiosyncrasies to give the home side an advantage, that every real Rugby man the world over knows and which the many Gloucester men that I met in New Zealand asked after at once.

Perhaps they would not all have felt quite the same affection for it now, with its added stands and other amenities, all so different from what it was in my days, with just one small homely stand; the dressing room for the players in the little inn opposite the entrance; the walk from the inn to the ground in our caps and blazers, and the little run about on the sacred turf before the kick off.

From every walk

I see all that now, as I do my fellow-players, drawn from every walk of life, and forming as happy a party as any club ever had, with George Romans, Arthur Hudson, Jimmy Stephens, Gordon Vears, Billy Johns, Ginger Wood, George Holford, Harry Berry, Whacker Smith, Willie and Ernie Hall, Bert Parham, Fred Pegler, “Shanter”

Dix (my successor at half-back and a great little man), and Jimmy Whyburn among them.

Nor must we forget their admirable chronicler, Bill Bailey, still happily with us.

All this is a long time ago, though, and many, alas, of these grand fellows have gone. But there still stands this almost hallowed ground, Arthur Hudson still watches over it, and its name is still Kingsholm. May its traditions continue, and may those young fellows who play on it be conscious, at least now and then, of their goodly heritage!

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HOOKING FOR 28 YEARS

By A. D. (“Bumps”) Carpenter, one of the greatest hookers in the country

I like to remember that after playing rugby continuously from the time I was 15 until I was 43, I felt so fit that if war had not intervened I would have had two or three more seasons!

I am proud too, of the fact that I was the first and only player from the Forest to get his international cap – although I’m sure others merited the honour.

I like to recall the fine sportsmanship I met and the many friends I made. We had some tough games in those days with hard knocks given and taken, but off the field there was always the ready handshake and the friendship of true sportsmen.

I am proud of the fact that from the 1928/9 season up to the outbreak of the war I was picked for Gloucester and that I played in five county finals, my team winning four of them.

It is good to remember that I played twice for the Rest against England – we beat ‘em once – and that a number of times I played in trial games and was reserve for England when I was 38 years old.

I am proud to have been associated with such players as Wilfred Wooler and Cliff Jones – one of the finest outside halves ever to have put on a rugby jersey ... and players like Tom Voyce and Wakefield, of Cinderford, who could run through the teams of to-day without having a hand put on them.

Fine Forest players

While it is good to recall the honours which came my way I think of the many fine players in the Forest who, because of one reason or another, never came under the spotlight. Stan Weaver of Cinderford, for example, would not have been outclassed by the best.

And to-day! I like to think that the Carpenter tradition is being carried on by two of my sons, George for Lydney and Denzil for Cheltenham.

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THEY PLAYED IN THE FIRST MATCH

[Below a recent (1951) photograph of the two is the caption:]

Mr. Charles Williams (85), host of the Theatre Vaults, Westgate-street, Gloucester, and Mr. Walter Taylor (80), of 28, Slaney-street, Gloucester, the only survivors of the team which played Burton 60 years ago, discuss incidents of that memorable game.

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GLO'STER'S FOURTEEN MEN IN COUNTY FIFTEEN

By CHARLIE WILLIAMS

MY STORE OF MEMORIES OF GLOUCESTER R.F.C. WOULD FILL A BOOK. BUT, I LIKE TO REMEMBER IN PARTICULAR ...

The occasion in 1891 when I was one of 14 Gloucester players who were presented with County caps – the first ever awarded officially by Gloucestershire – for playing in the championship final against Lancashire.

At no time since have so many Gloucester players appeared at the same time in the County team.

The fourteen were: A. F. Hughes, G. Witcombe, A. Cromwell, A. Collins, A. C. Williams, C. Jenkins, Tom Collins, E. T. Bagwell (capt.), H. V. Page, W. George, S. Ball, W. H. Taylor, W. Jackson and C. A. Hooper.

S. Nicholls was the only non-Gloucester man in the side.

We were beaten in that memorable final 14 points to nil – but what a battle it was.

Trip by horse-brake

There are many other battles I like to recall, but two which gave me the greatest satisfaction were our wins over Cardiff in 1902 and 1903.

Another victory which stands out in my memory was that over the Newport “Invincibles,” when the Gloucester side were so grandly led by Tommy Graham.

Looking back it's hard to realise that Kingsholm was opened as long as 60 years ago.

I still retain vivid memories of the players' trip by horse brake to the ground ... incidents during the game with Burton ... and the celebration dinner.

Since then the club has built up a magnificent record.

To me it has left a legacy of golden memories of grand games ... fine colleagues ... and a wonderful spirit of sportsmanship.

I am proud to have filled a small niche in such a distinguished company of sportsmen.

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FIREWORKS IN THE STREETS

By Walter Taylor, now 80

Perhaps my most outstanding memory did not take place on the field of play. It was in Northgate-street, Gloucester.

We had just returned from beating Llanelly at home in 1898. What a welcome we were given – the first English club to beat all four Welsh teams (Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Llanelly) in one season.

There were thousands of people at the station. Somebody snatched my bag – it turned up next week at Kingsholm with all my kit washed and ironed – and they chaired us through the city.

In all the big business houses they were showing coloured lights and letting off fireworks ...

Those were wonderful days. I should like to see them all again.

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HE SCORED FIRST TRY FOR LYDNEY AGAINST GLO'STER

Mr. George Powell, who is now nearly 84, had the distinction of being the first man to score a try for Lydney against Gloucester.

This was the first match between the two clubs in season 1887-88, when Lydney were victorious. Mr. Powell was also one of the original Lydney players who appeared in the first match (against Sudbrook) on the Lydney ground.

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Highlights of unforgettable golden jubilee season

By Dr. ARNOLD ALCOCK, President Gloucester R.F.C.

ON MY PART I LIKE TO REMEMBER ... THE JUBILEE CELEBRATION OF GLOUCESTER R.F.C. ON NOVEMBER 13, 1924.

It has vivid memories for me as it took place in my first year of office as President of the Club. Yes, I like to remember ...

The great match against the team of Capt. W. S. Donne, the then president of the E.R.U., which Gloucester - captained by Tom Voyce – just lost after a most exciting game.

The international, H. C. Catcheside, who was one of the winning threequarters and who is now chairman of the English selection committee.

Many thrilling games at Kingsholm, notably perhaps some of those against Oxford University, which stand out in my memory as the most brilliant. They were unrivalled in skill, open play, team-work and good sportsmanship.

Cheeky tries

Of individuals imprinted in my memory stand out "Father" Dix and his cheeky tries (how seldom a scrum half scores now!); Tom Millington and his deadly tackling and versatility in playing in any position in the back division; and Tom Voyce and his amazing try against Newport when he received the ball in the centre of the field and without wavering ran straight through the Welsh side and put the ball down between the posts.

In more recent times my memory is thrilled with the match winning of Harold Boughton and Willie Jones. The latter I regard as the best handler and kicker of a Rugby ball I have ever seen.

And I do not think I shall forget Charlie Crabtree picking the ball off the ground at full-back and scoring against Leicester.

I look back with pride on many team achievements ... that unexplained atmosphere, good fellowship and sportsmanship in Gloucester Rugby circles ... the outstanding service of Arthur Hudson ... the loyalty of officials, committee and supporters ... the conscientious referees.

And I like to look forward to the time when we shall be allowed to carry out all the improvements we envisage to make Kingsholm the best equipped ground in the British Isles.

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A FAMOUS player and official who is to retire at the end of this season after 50 years distinguished service, tells of a

FIGHT AGAINST THE SNOW

By Club Secretary, Arthur Hudson

KINGSHOLM has provided me with a rich harvest of 50 years of memories ... for I have seen it grow from a meadow with a barn which served as a stand to the present magnificent stadium.

I like to remember the scores of fine players, officials and committee members who have helped to make the Club what it is to-day ... the great struggles and magnificent feats ... the humorous little incidents which form an integral part of the history of the club and ground.

Cheese-cutter hat

I wonder how many people can recall Fred Rowlands and his band of instrumentalists who played in the streets and on the ground before games ... and who fiddled with greater glee to celebrate a triumph?

And I wonder how many can recall Harry Dyke, immaculately dressed and complete with a cheese-cutter hat, who tolled a bell to signalise the start of play and other occasions?

At that time Gloucester players changed in the White Hart and the visitors in the Ram in Southgate Street, from where they travelled to Kingsholm by wagonette.

When club was hard-up

In those far-away days it was not unusual for the club to be hard up.

In fact, officials and committeemen were required to act as guarantors to the bank.

REVENUE AT THE FIRST MATCH AT KINGSHOLM CAME TO ONLY A FEW POUNDS. ON FEBRUARY 6 1949, WHEN THE FAMOUS CARDIFF SIDE WERE VISITORS, THE GATE RECEIPTS WERE £831.

The attendance at that game was 15,000 – a club match record – although over 20,000, the highest ever, saw the England and Wales boys international in 1947.

Biggest receipts came from the Services internationals during the war when over £10,000 was raised for charities. One match alone produced £2,100.

Spade commandos

It is intriguing to go through the records to note how few games have been cancelled owing to the weather.

As a result of the great flood in 1948 – when Kingsholm was invaded by water for the first time – our home match with Newport was switched.

But a great fall of snow one Christmas in the early 1920's nearly caused cancellation of the meeting with the O.M.T.'s. On that occasion, however, we beat the elements.

Snow covered Kingsholm to a considerable depth and I had the shock of my life when I came back from a visit to Hereford to see how much was on the ground.

An S O S was sent out and within a short time hundreds of people carrying shovels made their way to the ground.

These spade commandos worked hour after hour clearing the ground and their work was completed to enable the match to start only 15 minutes late.

This was a magnificent achievement and an example of the fine spirit of Rugby followers.

Labour of love

Looking back over 50 years as a player and official, I do not begrudge one minute of the time I have devoted to Rugby.

To me it has been a labour of love; it has given me some of my richest memories.

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REPORTING MATCHES FOR NEARLY HALF-A-CENTURY

By “W.B.,” one of the West’s best-known critics

Gloucester’s Diamond Jubilee Celebration of the establishment of Rugby headquarters at Kingsholm has a particular personal interest for myself for it marks another stage in the close and intimate association I have enjoyed with the famous City club for well over 60 years.

As a youth I was a keen follower of the team in the eighties and nineties at the Spa, and I retain happy memories and vivid recollections of memorable games played with leading English and Welsh clubs.

The players of days long past who did duty under the leadership of such famous captains as the late J. F. Brown, H. J. Boughton, T. Graves Smith and Tom Bagwell set up a standard of Rugby which captivated the local football public and placed Gloucester among the foremost clubs in the country.

This proud position has been well maintained at Kingsholm with ever increasing support – a tribute to the splendid cooperation of a loyal and enthusiastic set of officials and a succession of players who have worthily upheld the brilliant achievements of their predecessors.

HAPPY MEMORIES

From 1892 (the second season at Kingsholm) until the outbreak of war in 1939, I had the distinction of reporting Gloucester’s home and away matches for the Football “Citizen.”

And here I might mention that the popular “Pink Un,” which has now reached a circulation never contemplated in the old days, has contributed not a little to the undoubted popularity and advancement of Rugby football in the City and county, and the West of England generally.

Of my own humble efforts in the same direction I will leave to the judgement of the supporting public.

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THEY HELPED TO MAKE THRILLS, RECORDS OF 78 YEARS

The history of Gloucester R.F.C. is studded with enthralling stories of triumphs over difficulties ... set-backs ... and magnificent achievements by a long line of men, on and off the field, who have made outstanding personal contributions to the undying glory of the Club.

It is clearly impossible, in these days of newsprint restrictions to publish a comprehensive history of the club ... to give in detail all the stories which enrich it ... or to quote the names of all who have helped to make the club famous throughout the land.

But here in potted form, are some of the highlights which punctuate the story of 78 history-making years.

September 15, 1873. At a meeting at the Spread Eagle Hotel, Gloucester, for the purpose of enrolling members of a Football Club for the City, about 45 gentlemen joined. Mr. Frank Hartley was elected captain and Mr. J.P. Riddiford, Hon. Sec. Thus was Gloucester R.F.C. founded.

First-ever captain was a solicitor, Francis Hartley, who led the team against College School, Hereford and Worcester in their initial matches.

The first balance sheet reveals there were 35 members ... and total income from all sources £11.

Pioneers of passing

When the Club moved to the Spa in 1874 [sic] there was a rise in membership and interest ... and the fixture list grew in length and importance. By 1883 the team's bag had mounted to 21 goals and 62 tries in the season.

In those far-off days Gloucester pioneered the passing game. Said "The Citizen:" "It is a matter of notoriety that Gloucester has taught all whom it has met the value of the passing game."

Towards the end of the season 1878-79 the club, in the hopes of filling their coffers, played a match by artificial light. Unfortunately one of four lights failed; the other was uncertain.

As a result the spectators did a great deal of damage to the shrubs and walks and the Corporation gave the Club notice to quit.

This was subsequently withdrawn following a petition signed by 3,000 citizens. After playing a few games at Deans Walk the Club returned. But the days of Rugby at the Spa were numbered.

One of many names revered in the history of the Club is that of Vears.

A. W. Vears, affectionately known as "Commodore," was associated with the Club from the early days at the Spa; was chairman of the directors of the Kingsholm Ground Co., and also chairman of the Club committee.

Two of his sons, Lindsay and Gordon, were members of the team for several seasons.

Supreme fifteen

The only season through which Gloucester went undefeated was in 1882-3 under the leadership of J. F. Brown. But in that period only 14 matches were on the card.

Teams led by H. J. Boughton (1883-4) and T. Bagwell (1890-1), facing longer programmes, suffered only two defeats.

Brown led the team for seven years ... afterwards rose to become Postmaster General of South Africa.

Some old followers still remember the occasion in season 1893-4 when the Club were suspended for a month for playing W. Shewell (Stroud) against Newport without having secured an official transfer.

J. HANMAN, CAPTAIN AT THE TIME, WAS SUSPENDED FOR THE REST OF THE SEASON – A HARSH PUNISHMENT.

Worst season was probably in 1895-6 when 12 defeats were suffered and only eight games won.

A great-hearted little player, Tom Bagwell, who died in 1943, had 60 years association with the club as player, captain and "baggage man." Under his leadership Gloucester achieved some of their best playing results.

Captain of the team from 1896 to 1900, W. H. Taylor was one of the fleetest three-quarters in the country.

During Walter Taylor's captaincy the team earned the title of the "record smashers."

Lydney's first success at Kingsholm was in 1904-5, when they won 8-6. Cheltenham had their first win there in 1906-7 (by three pts to nil).

George Romans, captain for four seasons and part of another, converted 344 tries and kicked 29 other goals for the side. He led the City XV which beat Bristol in a County Cup final in 1904-5.

Famous triumphs

From 1910-11 until 1921-2 Cardiff failed to record a win at Kingsholm and Gloucester recorded some of their most famous triumphs.

One of the most famous captains, George ("Biddy") Holford played for over 11 years, and appeared in 34 County matches.

IN JANUARY 1921, NEWPORT CAME TO KINGSHOLM UNDEFEATED IN 25 GAMES ... AND WENT BACK BEATEN 12-9 AFTER AN EPIC BATTLE.

Sid Smart, captain of the City XV in 1921-2 was capped 12 times for England – made 26 appearances for Gloucestershire.

Among many notable figures who played under his inspired leadership were Fred Meadows, A. J. Kerwood of Lydney, Tom Millington and W. Dix, held by many to have been one of the finest attacking scrum-halves in the country.

An outstanding season was in 1922-3 when the team, under the captaincy of Frank Ayliff, a forward scored 516 points against 273.

Leading scorer was Sid Brown, who flashed over for 22 tries.

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Quartet of England "Caps"

One of the high spots of the Club's history of contributions to the England team was the selection in 1909-10 of four Gloucester players, A. Hudson (threequarter), D. R. Gent (half-back), H. Berry and W. Johns (forwards).

This famous quartet established a Gloucester club record.

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Present County President, Tom Millington, a Gordon League recruit, scored 717 points for Gloucester, mainly by goal-kicking; captained the County in the only win secured over the 1926 touring Maoris. In three seasons he topped a century of points - a very fine achievement.

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SCORED 44 TRIES IN SEASON

NO ONE HOLDS A MORE DISTINGUISHED RECORD FOR THE CLUB THAN ARTHUR HUDSON, WHO COMPLETES 50 YEARS' SERVICE AS A PLAYER AND OFFICIAL THIS SEASON, AT THE END OF WHICH HE WILL RETIRE.

He captained Gloucester five seasons (1908-13); appeared eight times for England; represented Gloucestershire on 28 occasions; led the fifteen which won the 1920 County championship against Yorkshire; became secretary when he gave up playing in 1920 and has served in an official capacity ever since.

At his best one of the most dangerous wing threequarters in the country, he scored 236 tries for Gloucester – an amazing record.

In season 1905-6 Arthur Hudson scored 44 tries to establish a record which has never since been approached.

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GLO'STER, COUNTY, ENGLAND CAPS IN ONE SEASON

IN HIS FIRST SEASON WITH THE CLUB, TOM VOYCE, FORMER SCHOOLBOY INTERNATIONAL, GAINED GLOUCESTER, COUNTY AND INTERNATIONAL CAPS.

He went on to create an amazing record by appearing in 18 consecutive games for England, thus beating Frank Stout's record of 14.

Voyce, one of the most famous players produced by Gloucester, captained the team three seasons, played in 28 County engagements, 28 internationals and was a member of the British touring XV which visited South Africa in 1924.

He has been Gloucestershire's representative on the Rugby Union Committee since 1931.

Dr. Arnold Alcock, the Club's President, has been connected with Gloucester Rugby for over quarter of a century.

A player of distinction, he appeared for Guy's Hospital in company with his brother, F. Alcock; played for Surrey 11 times; was capped for England against South Africa in 1906-7.

One of the youngest

One of the youngest players ever to captain the City XV was John A'Bear, a recruit from the Old Cryptians.

Under his leadership in 1937-8, the team won 29 games – equalling the record set by Fred Wadley's side – lost six, drew one and scored 413 points against 228.

With another heavyweight, Roy Morris, he performed brilliantly in the second row.

SECOND BEST AGGREGATE OF POINTS WAS RECORDED BY THE 1947-8 TEAM LED BY GORDON HUDSON, COUNTY PLAYER AND WAR TIME INTERNATIONAL.

During the season the team compiled 588 points and Willie Jones established a new individual record with 214.

Until the advent of Willie Jones after the second world war, the record for scoring most points for the club was held by Tom Millington (154 in 1921-2), followed by George Romans (152 in 1905-6).

W. Johns made 238 appearances for Gloucester; 22 for the County and seven for England.

Now Rugby Editor of the Sunday Times, D. R. Gent played for Gloucester for six seasons; was captain 1906-7; had trials for England and Wales and appeared five times for England.

Revenue at the opening game at Kingsholm 60 years ago was £47/7/3.

Don Meadows, captain of the 1936-7 team was held by most people to have been most unlucky not to have been selected for England.

Tragic feature of Gloucester's memorable 1924-5 season was the death of Stan Bayliss, who met a fatal injury in a game with the All Blues.

The most talented and yet the most controversial figure in Gloucester post-war rugby, fly-half Willie Jones, holds the distinction of having scored more points for the club, in a single season than any other player.

His record total of 214 points, compiled in 1947-8, was made up of 43 conversions, 19 penalty goals, 17 dropped goals and one try.

This sticky-fingered, goal-kicking wizard was a war-time Welsh international. He joined the club in 1945 and subsequently his half-back partnership with Danny Evans became an outstanding feature of Gloucester rugby.

Among brothers who have played for Gloucester, none were more famous than Frank and Percy Stout, who made their debut under the captaincy of Charlie Williams.

Frank, a forward, appeared 14 times for England; Percy, a threequarter, made five appearances.

At different times seven members of one family – the Halls – played for Gloucester.

They were the brothers George, Charlie, Jim, Ernie, Albert, Harry and Willie – sons of Charles Hall.

And no Gloucester followers will forget the fine services rendered by Tom Cook and his family.

Meeting Clifton for the first time in 1900-1, Gloucester won 66 points to nil! In the return the City won 72pts., to 3!

In the same season Gloucester lost to Leicester at Kingsholm this being their first defeat at the hands of an English team since 1898!

Some of the facts and figures quoted in this page are based on material compiled by Mr. William Bailey during his long association with the club.

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BEST CLUB SIDE OF THE YEAR

In their diamond jubilee year, 1933-4, Gloucester gained the distinction of being the “best club side of the year.”

IT WAS A SEASON OF OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES. LED BY FRED WADLEY THE TEAM WON 29 GAMES; LOST 9; DREW 2 – AND SCORED 556 POINTS AGAINST 205.

A new record was established in the number of wins; the second highest aggregate of points was recorded.

During Fred Wadley’s three years of captaincy from 1932-34 Gloucester gained the double victory over Newport – the first achieved over the Usksiders for 50 years.

Fred Wadley played in all matches in consecutive seasons from 1933-35 and established a record of 78 consecutive appearances.

“Digger” Morris had 47 consecutive appearances to his credit in one spell; Roy Parry topped 60 and Tom Day 50.

Former Gloucester international full-back, Harold Boughton, scored about 3,500 points in first-class rugby in 21 seasons.

A powerful and accurate goal-kicker he compiled more than 3,000 points for the Gloucester club alone, retiring at the end of the 1945-6 season.

One of the unluckiest players ever to miss an England cap was Roy James, who captained the City team in 1930-1 and made 27 appearances for Gloucestershire.

HIGHSPOT OF HIS TERM LEADING THE TEAM WAS A DOUBLE OVER CARDIFF FOR THE FIRST TIME FOR 40 YEARS.

Previous “double” had been in 1890-1 under the captaincy of Tom Bagwell, one of Gloucester’s finest ever players.

A recruit from Hereford, L. E. Saxby, was one of Gloucester’s most distinguished players. He appeared 24 times for Gloucestershire, and captained one of the championship teams; in 1932 he was appointed to lead the England pack against South Africa and Wales and was honoured by selection for the Barbarians.

“Kit” Tanner and A. D. Carpenter gained England caps the same season.

Under the captaincy of J. C. Brooks in 1935-6, Gloucester ended with 23 wins, five draws and nine defeats – the second occasion in 21 years the Club had gone through the season with less than 10 reverses.

In the fifth season of a fine career, International Harold Boughton topped 1,000 points for the Club – a record in English rugby.