

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 1st 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.

"Of the records of the club, you know more than I do," he continued. "We know it is magnificent. We know you are one of the first clubs in the country."

The President paid tribute to Gloucester's contribution to England in providing good internationals and said that outstanding among them he knew personally were Tom Voyce, A. D. Carpenter, Dai Gent and Arthur Hudson, the latter having served the club for 50 years.

He also thanked the club for raising over £10,000 for Navy, Army and Air Force charities as a result of the Services International matches held at Kingsholm during the war.

In conclusion, Mr. Cleaver told the gathering: "All I have to say to you Gloucester people is 'carry on in the same way, maintaining the great traditions and glorious heritage that you have inherited in the good old game of rugby football.'"

Responding, Dr. Alcock said it was a very great honour to him to think that he had presided not only at the jubilee dinner of the Gloucester Club in 1924 but also at the Kingsholm jubilee dinner.

Dr. Alcock went on to mention that there was a time when the club's finances were so low that they thought of selling the whole of the Kingsholm ground's frontage in Worcester-st. for shops, but after Mr. Arthur Hudson became secretary the club never looked back.

The ground had been used for all sorts of purposes besides rugby football. Even baseball had been put on there.

During the war it had been used as a first aid depot, among other things, and one side of the ground became the main ambulance station for Gloucester.

Dr. Alcock also had a word of praise for the present players.

Stating that the club had already played 10 matches this season he added: "May I take this opportunity of thanking the players for their loyalty to the club in turning out twice a week." (applause)

The local clubs

Proposing "Our Guests" the Chairman of the club (The Rev. H. M. Hughes) said he hoped that Gloucester's civic representatives would continue to show interest in the club as it continued to put Gloucester to the fore.

Mr. Hughes also emphasised the importance of the local teams to the Gloucester club. "We would not be a club of any standing unless we received the full support of the clubs round about," he added.

Responding, the Mayor (Coun. W. J. Smith) said that throughout the years the Gloucester Rugby Football Club had brought credit and honour to the city.

"We in the city are proud of the fact that, win or lose, the game is played in the grand sportsmanlike manner which one always associates with rugby football," he declared.

Col F. D. Prentice, hon. secretary of the Rugby Union, who also responded, recalled that he played at Kingsholm in the Gloucester club's jubilee match and that the game was refereed by Mr. Adrian Stoop, another of the guests at the dinner.

He emphasised that whenever the Union or the International Board altered a law of the game it was done for one reason only, the benefit of the player.

Col. Prentice said that when he became hon. secretary of the Union in 1947 there were 860 affiliated clubs. To-day the number was well over 1,300.

Col. Prentice gave a warning that in a few years time there was going to be a great shortage of referees, and he appealed to players to take up refereeing after they had finished playing.

The last speaker to respond to the toast was Mr. Dai Gent, ex-Gloucester captain and international.

“You have at this very representative gathering more famous people in British rugby football than I have seen assembled at the same table for a very long time,” he said.

Mr. Gent referred to the time when he was one of the four Gloucester players who set up a record by all playing for England at the same time in the 1909-10 season and declared: “It reflected very great honour and credit on one provincial city in days when provincial club players – I say this with bated breath – had to be mighty good players to get a cap.”

Mr. Gent added that Kingsholm “where they play rugby football” was not far behind the Cathedral in spreading the name of the city in various parts of the world.

Guests

Among other guests at the dinner were the City High Sheriff (Mr. P. D. Clarke), the City Member (Mr. M. Turner-Samuels, K.C.), Mr. A. D. Sloop (member of the Rugby Union Committee), Mr. Tom Millington (President of the Gloucestershire County R.F.U.), Mr. C. J. Humby (Hon. Secretary of the Gloucestershire County R.F.U.), Mr. A. Hurran (Chairman of directors of Gloucester City A.F.C.), Alderman S. J. Gillett, Mr. G. J. J. Robertson (Editor of “The Citizen”), Mr. A. H. Carter (Assistant Chief Constable of Gloucestershire) and Chief Supt. W. E. Wakefield.

Other officials of the Gloucester club who attended were Mr. Arthur Hudson (Hon. Secretary and Vice-President), Mr. A. T. Voyce (Vice-President), Mr. A. H. Balchin (Hon. Treasurer) and Mr. T. Burns (Hon. Fixtures Secretary).

Among the apologies was one from “W.B.,” who reported the club’s games for “The Citizen” for 50 years.

Rugby clubs represented included Bristol, Cardiff, Leicester, Swansea, Cheltenham, Clifton, Old Blues and Devonport Services.

Music and entertainment were provided by the Buff Woolton Trio, Phil Barker (banjoist) and Billy Seldom (comedian with piano).

.....

They played in opening match

Mr. Charlie Williams and Mr. Walter Taylor, the only two surviving members of the Gloucester team which beat Burton in the first match at Kingsholm 60 years ago were both at the dinner.

Two representatives of the Burton club were also among the guests. After mentioning that they had presented him with a bottle of beer laid down in 1929, Dr. Alcock said he hoped that Burton would be represented at Kingsholm’s “Double Diamond Jubilee” in 60 years time.