

## ARTHUR HUDSON

By Malc King

Arthur Hudson was born in 1882, and grew up as a soccer player. In 1902 he switched to rugby and soon became a regular in the first team as either wing or centre, although it was as a wing that he was to hit the heights. He played in 260 matches for Gloucester, and scored 236 tries (including a record 41 tries in the 1905-6 season). He captained the club for 5 seasons from 1908 to 1913. Arthur also made 28 appearances for Gloucestershire, captained the county, won the county championship in 1920, and scored 9 tries in 8 games for England between 1906 and 1910.

Contemporary reports speak of Arthur being the hardest man to tackle, tearing down the wing with his knees coming up so high that anyone not catching him just right was knocked flying. Arthur himself is quoted as saying that he told his centre to hold the ball, until Arthur suddenly shouted "Now" – the pass would be made and Arthur would be racing away to the line.

He started work as a clerk with the Midland Railway, but gave this up to start a sports outfitters shop, initially with D McGregor, a member of the 1905 New Zealand touring side in 1905, who stayed on in England to play for Gloucester. The business later became Arthur's alone, and later a family business as two further generations joined the firm.

A distinguished playing career was interrupted by WW1, when Arthur joined the RN and served on submarines – when ashore he played rugby for Devonport Services, the Navy and the Combined Services. He played briefly after the war, but broke his collar bone playing against Yorkshire in the county championship final, and that finished his playing career.

In 1919, he became Assistant, and then Secretary of the Club in 1920, a role which he combined with Treasurer and Fixture Secretary for many years. He also became a Director of the Ground Company. He took a close control of club affairs and finances, and liked to tell people that he ran the Club "like a business". It prospered as a result, and Arthur's central role in this was regularly acknowledged by the President, Dr Arnold Alcock, and Chairman, John Brookes, with whom he worked closely through the 1920s and 1930s, when Arthur took pride in a continuous period of a "healthy balance sheet". His influence spread across all facets of the Club, and "The Doc" was to reminisce later about "the genius displayed by Mr Hudson in the management of the affairs of the club".

Immediately after the war he personally nursed the baby that was to become the Memorial Ground, a permanent reminder of the rugby players who were killed in action, and until his death he was a trustee.

In 1951, Arthur reminisced on the 60<sup>th</sup> jubilee of the Club playing at Kingsholm - "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.”

Arthur remained as Club Secretary right through to 1962, thereafter becoming Team Secretary, continuing as a life member and vice-president, and assuming the mantle of “Grand Old Man of Gloucester Rugby”. It was claimed that he did more for Gloucester rugby than any man. He also served on the county committee.

Other sporting interests were athletics and tennis – he was secretary of the Gloucester Athletic Club, another club he took to financial security, and he ran 20 tennis courts on his land at the Chestnuts, Escourt Road.

He died on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1973, aged 90, by which time he had not only seen his son, Gordon, captain the Club, but also be elected as Chairman.