

## “DOC” ALCOCK

By Malc King

Dr Arnold Alcock, popularly known as “The Doc”, played his rugby in London for Guy’s Hospital. He also made 11 appearances for Surrey, and won a single cap for England against South Africa during the 1906-7 season. Dr Alcock was registrar at Guy’s when he read reports of King Edward VII’s visit to Gloucester during the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Royal Infirmary in 1907. For the next 66 years he lived and worked in the City, finding that “it is easy to arrive, but almost impossible to leave”.

“The Doc” soon joined the Club, but as administrator rather than player, and in 1924 he was elected as Club President, a position he was to occupy for 45 years. His first major duty was to preside over the celebrations marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the club, which included a match against a side raised by Capt Donne, then President of the ERU. In 1951 he felt proud to preside again at the 60<sup>th</sup> jubilee of the Club playing at Kingsholm, and took stock of his involvement with the Club – “ 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.” In fact his long and distinguished leadership of the Club was far from over.

For many seasons, players of either side, if suffering injury on the field of play, might find themselves on “The Doc’s” operating table. This happened to S. A. Waide, the Oxford and Irish international wing three-quarter, who was injured a few minutes before the finish of a match against Oxford University at Kingsholm. In a tackle Waide fell awkwardly, damaged his spleen and was assisted from the field. The following day, Waide’s condition took a serious turn, but an operation was performed by Dr. Alcock, and Waide recovered in time to represent his University against Cambridge at Twickenham.

Although rugby may have been his dearest love, “The Doc” played a much wider part in the life of the City. He was a founder member and Chairman of Hospital Welfare, and Chairman of the United Almshouses. From 1943 to 1948 he was Chairman of the Gloucester and District National Savings Committee and during that time collected over £13,000,000 for “Wings for Victory” and similar projects. On his retirement as senior surgeon at the Gloucestershire Royal Hospital, he devoted himself to public service, and became City High Sheriff in 1953. He was on the committee of the Friends of Gloucester Cathedral and Chairman of the Three Choirs Festival, in which he and his wife also performed.

He eventually decided he should stand down as President of the Club in favour of Tom Voyce, and within a couple of years he had died aged 91, the last survivor of that England team which had played the first South African tourists so many years before. At his memorial service, Canon Mervyn Hughes, who had served under him as Chairman of the Club for 22 years,

said that “Practically all his interests were involved in the health and happiness of people in Gloucester. He could have made a name for himself in Harley Street, but the greatest honour Dr Arnold Alcock knew was to be accepted and respected, and perhaps a little loved, by the people of Gloucester.” An era was over.