

## **CANON H.M.HUGHES**

Mervyn Hughes was an open side wing forward who played 55 matches for Gloucester in 1937-38 and 1937-39. He was a Welsh trialist and Oxford blue who also played for Chepstow, London Welsh and Cardiff and Gloucestershire. He was Chairman of Gloucester RFC for twenty two years, President for a further sixteen and was one of the great figures of Gloucester Rugby.

Harold Mervyn Hughes was born on 12 July 1913. He played for Chepstow as a schoolboy and in 1930 played for the club against Gloucester United, before going on to study divinity at St David's College Lampeter.

He went up to Oxford in 1934 and appeared regularly for the first XV during the 1934-35 season although missing his blue. He played for Oxford in the 1935 and 1936 varsity matches. On November 7 1935 he was "outstanding" in an Oxford University side which lost 10-9 against the All Blacks, who fielded virtually their best team.

In 1935-36 he joined London Welsh after the varsity match. On February 29, playing for London Welsh against the Harlequins, The Times said of him "H M Hughes the Oxford wing forward was an outstanding figure – he seemed faster than the fastest Harlequin back, which was saying something." At the end of that season The Times said "H M Hughes, the Oxford wing forward, looks one of the most promising players of his type in the British Isles."

In 1936-37 he again played for London Welsh and appeared in the Final Welsh trial. He made his debut for Cardiff against the Barbarians on March 27 and played several games for the club at the end of that season.

He was ordained a deacon and appointed to St Catherine's Gloucester on October 3 1937. On November 27 he made his debut for Gloucester against his old university at Kingsholm. He played regularly for the rest of the season. In an 8-6 win at Newport he was described as "a fine breakaway forward." He was one of three clergymen playing for the club, the others being England international Kit Tanner and fellow Oxford blue Bill Phillips

Mervyn Hughes was ordained a priest on September 25 1938 and played regularly for Gloucester and Gloucestershire throughout that season. On October 15 he was described as "outstanding among the Gloucester forwards" in a win over Northampton.

Reverend Hughes continued to play for Gloucester during the early part of the war. His last major match was for Wavell Wakefield's XV v Tom Voyce's XV in a wartime charity match at Kingsholm (November 1940). During the war he organised rugby for his regiment and an injury to his knee while playing for the regiment ended his playing career at the age of 30.

After the war Canon Hughes maintained his association with the club. He joined the Committee and was elected Chairman in 1949, a post he held for 22 years. During that time there were many improvements at Kingsholm. A public address system was introduced in 1950 and a BBC commentary box was installed for the first time. The main grandstand was extended in 1954 and the same year covered concrete terracing was installed at the Worcester Street end. In 1965 a new clubhouse with skittle alley and dance floor was built and in 1967 floodlights were installed. Canon Hughes retired as Chairman in 1971. He had already been elected a Vice President in 1965 and continued to serve in that capacity. He was made a Life Member in 1976.

He succeeded Tom Voyce as President in 1979 and presided over the club during the turbulent years leading up to the introduction of the professional game. During that period sponsorship revenue increased hugely and the first hospitality boxes were built on the ground. Strict coaching regimes were

introduced leading to the appointment of the club's first professional Director of Rugby in 1993. Mervyn Hughes, a staunch advocate of the amateur game, must have viewed this with concern, while recognising the need for the club to maintain its position amongst the leading clubs in the country.

He retired as President in 1995 and continued to support the club, attending 1<sup>st</sup> XV, Colts and United games. He died at his home in Upton St Leonards in February 1998.