

GLOUCESTERSHIRE CHRONICLE

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GLOUCESTER FOOTBALL CLUB.

OPENING OF THE NEW GROUND.

The ceremony of the opening of the football portion of the new athletic ground at Kingsholm on Saturday will mark a new epoch in the history of the Gloucester Football Club, and will no doubt give a fresh impetus to our popular winter pastime.

The cause of the club seeking new quarters was the Cricket Club giving them notice to quit the Spa, and a movement was at once set on foot for the formation of a company to purchase a suitable ground. After a few preliminary meetings, at which various sites were suggested, it was ultimately decided that the Castle Grim estate at Kingsholm formed the most convenient, and negotiations were opened so successfully that the new company closed the purchase of the property, and at once set to work in preparing a portion of the estate for football.

The opening ceremony took place on Saturday, when Gloucester was honoured with a visit of the well-known Burton Club. The morning broke with a very dreary prospect, as heavy rains set in early, and the thick clouds — which still poured forth their contents — and a stiff wind gave very little hope of an improvement in the weather for the interesting event.

However, about mid-day the rain had completely cleared away, and as the time for the match to commence wore on the atmospheric conditions were very much improved, as the sun shone out brightly, and as a consequence there was a large crowd of football enthusiasts assembled on the ground.

The whole appearance of the old College School playing field has undergone a complete change within a very short space of time, the playing portion having been levelled and re-turfed, whilst the trees on the Kingsholm side have been pulled down and the field thereby made wider, and that portion bordering Dean's-walk has been fenced off with corrugated sheeting, which completely shuts out all view of the play.

A temporary grand-stand has been erected by the Gloucester Railway Carriage and Wagon Co., adjoining which is a small dressing-room for the players, and foot-boarding is also placed around the ground for the convenience of spectators.

The field on Saturday presented an animated scene, and the outside decorations consisted of a line of flags stretched across Northgate-street near the Spread Eagle Hotel, the new headquarters of the Gloucester Club, and also one at the bottom of Worcester-street, both of which were strung up by the generosity of Mr. Conway Jones. Owing to the late arrival of the Burton players, and to while away the time, the spectators were treated to a popular selection of music by the band of the 1st Gloucestershire Royal Engineers, conducted by Mr. J. H. Kilminster.

Shortly before four o'clock a loud cheer announced the arrival of the contesting teams, and by which time there must have been nearly 4000 persons on the ground, whither the players were conveyed from the Spread Eagle in two brakes provided by Mr. G. Symonds.

The home team were the first to enter the arena, closely followed by their stalwart opponents, the spectators giving them a right hearty welcome, and then Mr. T. Robinson, M.P., Messrs. A. W. Vears, Hubert J. Boughton, T. G. Smith, S. S. Starr, H. W. Bennett, H. S. Simpson, C. E. Brown, J. W. Goddard, A. Woodward, A. V. Hatton, F. H. Bretherton, L. H. Priday, G. Cummings, C. H. Dancey, S. Davis, T. Gurney, and others, took up a position in front of the grandstand, when Mr. Vears, chairman of the Football and Athletic Company, made a few remarks, in which he said he had great pleasure on behalf of the directors in offering to those present the new football ground to be used during the season as such.

Mr. Robinson, being asked to declare the ground open, said he knew it was not a time for making a speech, as they were all anxious to commence business. He was sure great thanks were due to the directors of the new ground for the public spirit they had shown in the matter, and who had worked very hard to get it into its present state, which previously was in a deplorable condition. Although much had been done, he thought there was a great deal more to be done, and he felt sure the directors would use their best endeavours to make the ground one of the finest football fields in the country (applause). He heartily welcomed the Burton team to Gloucester, and he was sure his Gloucester friends would find in them honourable opponents (applause). He expressed a hope that the Gloucester Club would have a successful season, and he wished that the best side would win the match that day.

A move was then made to the centre of the field, and after the process of photographing had been gone through, the ball was placed for Mr. Robinson to kick off, which he did, but as the leather only travelled a few feet the play settled down in midfield.

Albert Collins, Page, Healing, and Henshaw headed a forward rush in the direction of the Burton goal-line, and Ward's kick being charged down play was vigorously fought out in the Burton quarters. Ultimately Ball took the leather over the line, where he lost possession, but Henshaw was on the alert, and scored the first try on the new ground amidst loud applause, which was renewed when Jackson landed a goal from the place.

Play for a time became more even, but Burton found it a difficult task to stop the rushes of the home team or the spirited passing of the backs, and a sharp sprint by Taylor caused Ward to kick dead. Jackson was next prominent by a corkscrew run; Greenwell, however, soon floored him, and Marsden transferred play to less dangerous territory, where W. S. Lowe and the brothers Evershed were conspicuous in a round of passing.

Not to be denied, George got the ball from a loose scrimmage and handed on to Powell, who made tracks for the goal-line, but finding himself in the midst of a host of opponents, he promptly gave up possession to Bagwell, who romped in near the corner. Hughes was entrusted with the place-kick, but failed, and shortly afterwards Healing dribbled over the line, and a minor was conceded.

This was followed by a clever piece of play by George, who snapped up the ball from a scrimmage, and before his opponents were able to recover themselves he scored a try under the cross-bar, which Jackson had no difficulty in negotiating.

These early reverses caused Burton to infuse more spirit into the game, and Frank Evershed caused the subsequent play to be fought out in the home team's quarters, where H. C. Gorton gained further ground by a short dribble, which enabled Marsden to gather up the leather and make a shot at goal, and as the attempt failed Hughes touched down.

The home team then treated the spectators to a bout of splendid passes, J. Williams and A. Collins being most conspicuous, and Smith, with a huge kick, caused Gloucester to act on the defensive, but they were equal to the occasion, and Powell raced over and registered an unimproved try.

Hughes then took a splendid drop at goal, which just missed, and that player again distinguished himself by a brilliant piece of play, for when hard pressed on his own goal line by the Eversheds and A. Gorton he extricated himself from their grasp and kicked down the field, and for which he was loudly cheered.

This was the state of the game when half-time arrived, and after changing over the Burton men played with great energy, and greatly troubled the home team by their forward movements. W. S. Lowe made a strong run through the opposing forwards, and was only grassed when he reached Hughes, where Jackson and Powell went to his assistance.

Cromwell made an attempt to get in, and George and Lloyd both fell over the line, when the referee decided that the latter was the first to touch down. Page was the next to show up with a splendid dribble, being assisted by Henshaw, T. Collins, and C. Williams, and Taylor undoubtedly lost more than one opportunity of scoring by over-running the ball when passed to him.

Continuing to press, J. Williams was successful in getting over, which his brother failed to negotiate, and then Ball afterwards dribbled down the ground, where Powell had the best of W. S. Lowe in a short sprint and registered his second try, the place by C. Williams being abortive.

The referee then put an end to the game, the score being : — Gloucester, two goals and four tries (18 points); Burton, *nil*.

The players were : —

Gloucester : A. F. Hughes, back; T. Bagwell (captain), W. Jackson, T. B. Powell, and W. H. Taylor, three-quarter backs; W. George and S. A. Ball, half-backs; Cromwell, A. Henshaw, H. V. Page, A. E. Healing, C. Williams, J. Williams, A. Collins, and T. Collins, forwards.

Burton : J. P. Ward, back; G. A. Marsden, W. S. Lowe (captain), F. M. Sadler, and J. C. Gorton, three-quarter backs; F. C. Lowe and Smith, half-backs; E. Evershed, J. Glitheroe, H. Mayger, W. N. Greenwell, A. Gorton, H. C. Gorton, F. L. Lloyd, and F. Evershed, forwards.

Mr. G. Rowland Hill, hon. secretary of the Rugby Union, was the referee.

DIRECTORS' DINNER.

In the evening the directors of the new company entertained at dinner at the Spread Eagle Hotel both the contesting teams, the committee of the Gloucester Club, and a few friends. An excellent repast was provided by Host Grogan.

Mr. A. W. Vears, the chairman of the directors, presided, and amongst those also present were Mr. T. Robinson, M.P., Mr. G. Rowland Hill (hon. secretary of the Rugby Union), Messrs. H. J. Boughton, H. Mousell, T. G. Smith, John Fielding, S. S. Starr, Conway Jones, C. E. Brown, S. Davis, A. Woodward, G. Cummings, A. V. Hatton, C. H. Dancey, H. W. Bennett, T. Gurney, &c.

The loyal toast having been duly honoured, the CHAIRMAN proposed "Success to the new Football Ground." He said he ventured to predict that that would stand as a red-letter day in the annals of football in Gloucester, and that when completed the ground would stand second to none as the finest football and athletic ground in the West of England (applause).

He had heard it said in connection with the scheme that the directors must be men of great faith, and he hoped to a certain extent that it was true, as they would always strive to make it a substantial success. Their best thought and their best efforts would be given to deal with it in a thoroughly comprehensive manner in order to popularise the ground, and he was quite sure it was their wish that it should be made the home and centre of all kinds of out-door sports and recreation (applause).

Although it was not in the power of the directors to command success, they would endeavour to earn it. They were singularly honoured that day in having amongst them the member for the city, and he felt sure they were pleased to see him there that evening. They were also honoured with the presence of Mr. Rowland Hill, than whom no greater authority on football existed (loud applause).

They were also thankful in having had that day as the opposing team such exponents of the game as Burton. The Chairman concluded by calling on Mr. Robinson to speak to the toast of the evening, "Success to the new Football Ground."

Mr. ROBINSON, who was well received, said he was not much of a football man himself, but at the same time he always took great interest in anything which his fellow-citizens took an interest in. They were celebrating that day the opening of the new ground, and he could not help thinking how popular football had become.

When he was a boy football was played in a very different manner to what it was now played. Thanks to the energy of their fellow-citizens, the directors of the new company, a scheme was formulated, and by which means they had a new ground, and he was surprised to see what they had accomplished in so short a time in getting it in order. He felt convinced that the public would support them in every way to promote the prosperity of the new ground. He hoped the club would have that success which they deserved, and that they would have as good a record during the present season as they had last year — a splendid record which he admired — for they would have to rely upon them to keep up the popularity of the game.

They were very pleased to welcome their Burton friends, and although they had not been successful, he believed they played pluckily, and he hoped they would not feel discouraged, but would pay another visit to the city again, as they would always meet with a hearty welcome (applause).

After congratulating the Gloucester team on their success, Mr. Robinson went on to say that he was very much struck during the game that afternoon with the utter avoidance of any serious accidents, and he hoped football would so be played as to avoid accidents, and he impressed upon all players to manage things so as not to injure themselves or anyone else (applause).

As one taking great interest in the club he wished them every success, and he trusted they would do as well if not better in the future as they had done in the past. He believed the ground which had been opened that day was equal to any in this part of the country.

Mr. H. J. BOUGHTON said he rose with a great deal of pleasure to support the toast, as since the club was started in 1874 he had taken an active part in the noble pastime of football (applause).

He expressed the hope that the ground which had been opened so favourably that day would prove a great success, and it rested chiefly with the public of Gloucester to make it a success. He had always been very anxious for the Football Club to leave the Spa cricket field as he had long been of opinion that the two games could not be played there, and that it would be greatly to the interest of the Football Club to have a ground of their own.

Although, perhaps, his part had been a very humble one in regard to the new ground, he believed the efforts of the directors would redound to the interests of football in Gloucester, and that their finances and their play would both improve (applause). They would not rest content with their club being one of the best in the West of England, and they would not be content till they saw their county club the champion county of England, for they were within an ace of being so last year; and he firmly believed that if the match with Lancashire last year had taken place in Gloucester they would have made a much better fight than they did. If they would only stick to the captain he was of opinion that success would yet attend their efforts (applause).

One reason why he should like to see Gloucestershire to the fore was because he should like to see some of their men playing in their representative English matches, as if they had not three or four men worth playing for England, they had for the last two years a man good enough to play in the person of Mr. G. J. Witcomb. It was Mr. Witcomb's own fault he was not selected, as he did not go up to London to play in the trial match.

In conclusion he hoped the new ground would be the home of the Gloucester Football Club for very many years to come (applause).

Mr. A. WOODWARD also spoke to the toast, and congratulated Captain Bagwell on having won the opening match on the new ground, and the Burton team on the excellent manner in which they had tried to win the match, and expressed a hope that they might again welcome them to Gloucester.

The CHAIRMAN, replying to a remark of Mr. Woodward in reference to the notice which had been served on the Cricket Club to quit the Spa field, assured him that the notice had been withdrawn, and that there was nothing to fear in the future.

Mr. DANCEY and Mr. HATTON also spoke to the toast, the latter referring in complimentary terms to the manner in which Mr. Boughton had worked in starting the new company, and to the secrecy in which he had kept the negotiations which he (Mr. Hatton) had carried out in the purchase of the ground. He expressed a hope that the directors would arrange some *fêtes* on the ground for bank holidays (applause).

The CHAIRMAN then asked the company to drink "Success to the New Ground," which was done amidst loud applause, and he expressed a hope that the company would prove a remunerative investment to the shareholders.

Mr. BAGWELL tersely proposed "The Visiting Team," the company honouring the toast with the singing of "For they are jolly good fellows."

Mr. W. S. LOWE, captain of the Burton team, acknowledged the toast, and thanked them most heartily for the manner in which they had been entertained, and the great pleasure at their first visit to Gloucester, and congratulated the club on possessing such a good ground, hoping they would have greater success in the future than in the past (applause).

Mr. T. G. SMITH submitted "The Referee," which was drunk with musical honours.

Mr. ROWLAND HILL, who was loudly cheered, replied in a long speech. He thanked them most heartily for the kind manner in which they had received his name, and he took it that they had confidence in the body with which he had the honour of being connected, and to find in these troublous days of football that their inspired confidence in the West of England was a very great satisfaction and assistance to the Rugby Union.

He was delighted at seeing the worthy member for the city taking part in his first football match, and he congratulated him on being a very fine place-kick (laughter). He said there was nothing more likely to damage the game in the eyes of parents, who were kings of branches of sport their children would take part in, than practise rough play; but accidents were bound to arise in a game which brought out the highest qualities of an athlete. Every possible care was taken to prevent such accidents. The Union had passed most stringent regulations to put down rough play, and had a board of referees, who were determined that whenever they saw rough play they would interpose and turn the player off the ground. If that was done they would hear of no serious accidents arising from rough or brutal play. In the game that day it was played in accordance with the best traditions of English sport.

He congratulated the Gloucester team on their play of the day, and he had confidence that they would carry on their best traditions, and if possible be more successful in the future than in the past (applause).

Mr. T. GURNEY proposed the health of "The Treasurer, Mr. Starr," and that gentleman responded. He mentioned that the money taken at the gate that day amounted to £46 7s. 3d., making a total attendance of 3168 spectators, exclusive of members.

Mr. BOUGHTON proposed the healths of Mr. Kilminster, for providing the band; of Mr. Symonds, for brakes; of Mr. Conway Jones and Mr. Pickford, for decorations; and Mr. W. A. Woof, for giving the ball for the match.

Messrs. CONWAY JONES, KILMINSTER, and PICKFORD responded.

Mr. G. CUMMINGS proposed, and Mr. DANCEY seconded, the toast of "The Press," which the representative of the *Gloucestershire Chronicle* acknowledged.

The health of Mr. Boughton having been toasted, the company separated after a most enjoyable evening had been spent, during which a number of songs were sung. Mr. Leche's band also contributed to the harmony of the evening by playing a capital selection of music.

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