

CARDIFF RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Season 1977-78

In June 1977 there occurred one of the greatest moments of my life when I was elected Chairman of the "Greatest" Rugby Club in the world. This was for me an even higher accolade than having been made Cardiff captain in season 1955-56. I also regarded it as a tremendous challenge following our successful centenary year. My reliance on the guidance and assistance of the Hon. Secretary, Mr. Alun Priday, was immediate and my administrative responsibilities were soon efficiently organised. In retrospect, it would appear that the Club's victory in August 1977 in the Aberavon Sevens, over the select "Inn on the River" side, augured well for the rest of the season.

An encouraging start to the season was made in September with notable victories over Maesteg, Neath, Bristol, Aberavon, Coventry and Pontypool. The latter two victories were particularly gratifying, hard earned as they were.

On October 1st we were due to play the "old enemy"—Newport—who had made an inauspicious start to their season. Notwithstanding, as in all Cardiff-Newport games, our self-confidence and cocksureness was destroyed by an efficient Newport team who beat us 27-10. Our next game was at Pontypridd and again we were outplayed and lost 24-11. I well remember touch judge Peter Nyhan, flag raised, standing like a Welsh Guardsman, signalling a Cardiff foot in touch in the Cardiff half, whilst a vital Cardiff score was being made under the Pontypridd posts; and back to the first infringement both teams went! At this juncture the sense of despondency and alarm which appeared in the Cardiff camp was dispelled by Gerald Davies' positive assertion that these were temporary set-backs and that the team would recover to play entertaining, enjoyable, fifteen-man rugby—which they straight away did, as witnessed in the wins over Northampton, Penarth, Cambridge University and Harlequins. The game against the unbeaten Moseley side away was lost in an exciting tussle 18-9, owing mainly to Moseley's defence and place kicking abilities.

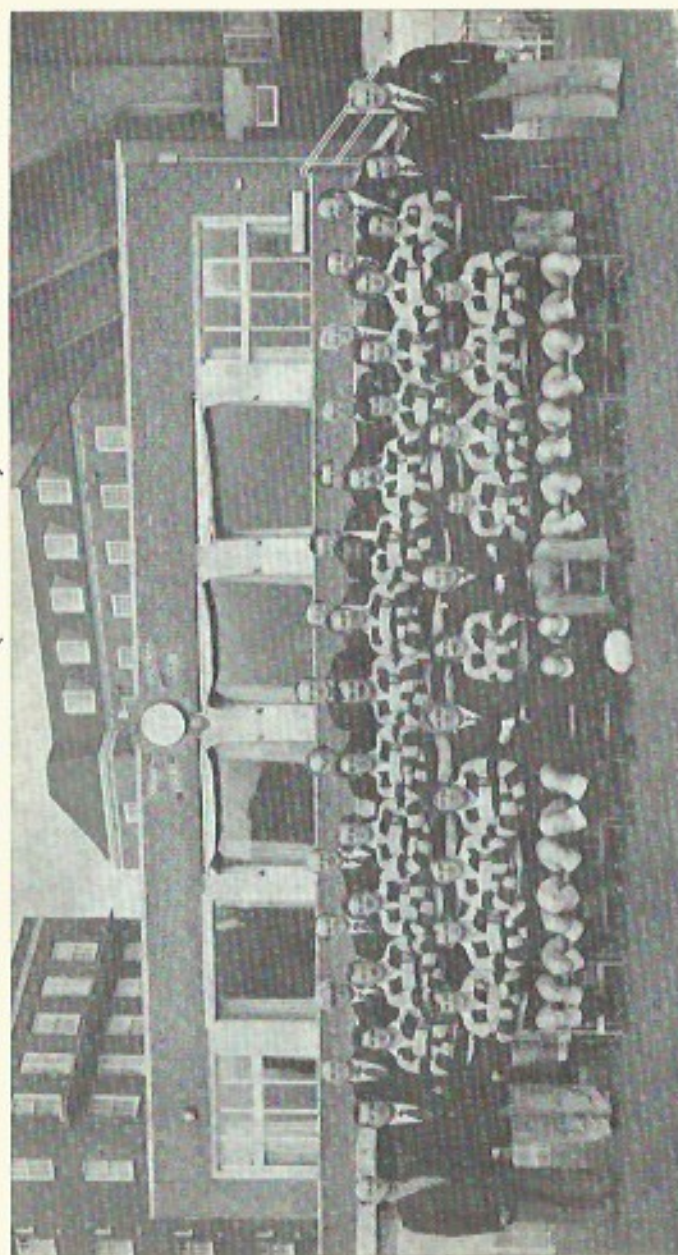
November arrived and brought good wins against Oxford University and Ebbw Vale. The commencement of our W.R.U.

Cup programme began with a first round draw against Garndiffaith (away), the proud Gwent club perched on a windswept hill just north of Pontypool. An exciting game was witnessed, with the "Garn" team tackling and chasing like heroes, and Cardiff were lucky to win by three penalty kicks to nil. Thence westward to Llanelli, where we had not won in nine years. Positive attacking rugby produced a convincing win for Cardiff by 20 to 10, which personally eradicated memories of my last visit to Stradey in season 1974-75 when we lost 37-10.

Early December saw a good win against Swansea, mainly ensured by "lady luck" and the kind bounce of the ball for us. The game against renowned Pontypool on a cold, rainy, windy night produced a large partisan Wednesday crowd, a superb 80 minute demonstration of forward power-play and a thrilling late rally by Cardiff, thereby ensuring an honourable draw. The London Welsh game was a personal triumph for ex-Wanderers centre Pat Daniels, who amassed a tally of five tries in an outstanding game which we comfortably won. Our second W.R.U. Cup game was played on the Arms Park against Cwmavon who, although they played enthusiastically, could not match us for power, speed and skill and we won 27-6. A good win 18-6 was also achieved against Bridgend on the Brewery Field despite a second half onslaught by the Bridgend pack. It was good to have the tactical control of Varsity Blue Gareth Davies, back in harness, after his two months with Oxford University.

No Christmas spirit was evident at the Arms Park on Boxing Day, when Pontypridd achieved a notable double against us in a well-deserved victory 13-9. The end of 1977 saw a tremendous struggle against Coventry when, having built up a commanding lead, Coventry almost overhauled us in a nailbiting finish, and we ended up victors 24-22. So ended 1977 on a high water mark of success with a long run of victories, four losses and one drawn game. But could we sustain Club and Cup performances into 1978?

The New Year began in superb fashion with the game against London Scottish, in which both sides excelled in open play and counter-attack, producing in the end a good win for us by 31-21. Bedford's scalp fell to us next in an unrelenting, dour game. Then came our W.R.U. Cup visit to Pontypool Park, where our chances of success against the famed "Pooler Eight" were nationally advertised as "minimal". As predicted, Pontypool dominated the game up front, but Cardiff's rock-like defence held firm and



Back Row:

T. I. Williams, D. M. Jones, B. Mack, A. D. Williams.

Second Row:

D. Pili, C. T. Howe, P. Davies, D. Lawrence, S. Lasp, R. Penley-Jones, T. Charles, P. Rawlins, I. Robinson, C. Smith, R. Lane, G. Davies, M. Murrell, A. Phillips, T. Brading, J. Evans (Coach), T. Hickey (Manager).

Third Row:

J. Davies, D. Thomas, M. Watkins, B. G. Niles (Vice-Captain), M. J. Collins (Chairman), T. G. R. Davies (Captain), A. J. Pridmore, J. Davies (Secretary), J. Llanos O'Brien, T. Holmes, C. Cantwell, D. Baker.

A. D. S. Bouts, W. H. Williams, C. D. Williams, L. M. Stevens, J. E. Davies, K. A. Rowlands, L. L. Williams, H. Norris, P. Nyman, T. I. Williams, D. M. Jones, B. Mack, A. D. Williams.

Gerald Davies capitalised on four good movements to score four magnificent tries, in so doing emulating his Lions' Hawkes Bay performance, to steal the game for us 16-11.

February brought heavy frost, ice and bad ground conditions, causing us to cancel the games against Bristol and Heriots F.P., but the inclement weather did not stop us inflicting defeats on London Welsh and Llanelli. Our W.R.U. Cup game at Ebbw Vale, the third Cup game we had been drawn away in Gwent—saw us 10-4 down at the interval, but following a stern half-time lecture, a transformed Cardiff became a decisive attacking machine to win the game 29-10.

March arrived with a rearranged game against Newport which was won 12-3 although the Black and Ambers had the greater share of ball possession. The game against Bridgend on the Arms Park followed its now familiar pattern and again we narrowly lost 7-6 in a game in which J. P. R. Williams was undoubtedly Bridgend's "saviour"! Our next visitors were the Lancashire side, Orrell, who played superb Jubilee rugby against us in a game in which we finally ran out good winners.

On Easter Saturday, in front of the largest crowd of the season, Cardiff's initial surge and momentum against the Barbarians was blunted, and then overcome, by a Baa Baas pack well led by England captain Billy Beaumont and a speedy, competent back line. We lost 20-8.

On Easter Monday, a changed Cardiff side, containing many challengers seeking places against Swansea in the next round of the Cup, comfortably disposed of Harlequins 22-6.

Our Cup game against Swansea at Aberavon arrived with the "All Whites" firm favourites after an immense forward carve-up of the Baa Baas on Easter Monday. Swansea dominated up to the last quarter of the game and led 15-3, only to be pressured by a frantic Cardiff blitzkrieg in which two magnificent lengths of the field tries were scored. But at the end of the game it was 18-13 to Swansea, and we wish them well in the Cup Final.

An opportunity to redress the balance occurred in the following week when we disposed of the two Cup Finalist teams. Newport were well beaten 29-8 on Cardiff Arms Park by a rejuvenated pack and some incisive three-quarter play; and Swansea were defeated 16-12 at St. Helen's in a game punctuated by injuries and replacements.

Messrs. Bowes and Nyhan, and others, avidly looked forward to the Cornish Tour, where we stayed in Penzance; and were not disappointed. The Cornish champions were thrust aside in a 46-3 blitz as the Club ran in ten superb tries. Following the traditional Sunday visit to Sennen Cove, a St. Ives side was beaten by 37-0 in driving wind and rain on Monday.

Unfortunately the Club had to send a much depleted side to Neath for the last game of the season and subsequently lost 31-13.

Our playing record for the season is as follows:

Played 38 Won 30 Lost 7 Drawn 1 Points for 859
Points against 433

This is exclusive of our Cup record.

Our brand of running rugby has totalled 152 tries and happily is in keeping with the traditional standards of the Cardiff Club. **Leading try scorers** are: Pat Daniels (21), T. G. Davies (18), C. Camilleri (15). **Highest points scorers** are: David Barry (170 pts.), Gareth Davies (99 pts. in 14 games). Certain players have naturally, in consequence of the team's success, attained national honours. On the eve of the Baa Baas game it was announced that Cardiff R.F.C. had six representatives in the Welsh squad to tour Australia in May 1978, namely T. G. Davies, Pat Daniels, Gareth Davies, Terry Holmes, Mike Watkins and Stuart Lane. We offer sincere congratulations, good wishes and "bon voyage" to them all. Likewise again, to Gerald Davies on equalling Ken Jones' record number of caps and to Gareth Edwards on reaching 53 Welsh caps not out. To Barry Nelmes, who deservedly regained his England position, to Mike Watkins and Stuart Lane, who were chosen for Wales B v. France B, we also offer sincere congratulations. In this respect, too, we offer congratulations to our good friend Brynmor Williams, now with Newport. In season 1977-78 to date, seven new first XV caps, reflecting the team's youthful emphasis, have been won by Pat Daniels, Don Llewellyn, David Barry, Terry Holmes, Peter Rawlins, Terry Charles and Glyn Davies.

My personal thanks go to John Davies, my Vice-Chairman, who has supported me wholeheartedly; to Alun Priday, whose expertise has helped me considerably; to Peter Nyhan, Assistant Hon. Secretary, who has proved an able successor in charge of programmes to David Hayward; to Brian Mark, Fixture Secretary, "l'extraordinaire"; to Keith Rowlands, who has represented East District and us so capably; to the Rugby Committee, good men

and true, and in particular to our hard working Selection Committee, and to our Club Coaches John Evans, Chris Padfield and Roger Beard; to Ken George and his conscientious and cooperative office staff; to the Ground Manager, Albert Francis, and all his staff, together with Bill Hardiman; to Mr. Harold Richards, the Club doctors, physios and Club masseurs for their medical expertise; to our Steward and Stewardess, Norman Leworthy and wife, and their bar staff for their wholehearted efforts on our behalf; to the Supporters Club, led by Ted John, for their loyalty and support; to the St. Alban's Band and their conductor, John Williams; to Don Davies and all the Club Stewards; and to all loyal Club members everywhere.

CARDIFF ATHLETIC XV—SEASON 1977/78

Mervyn John was appointed captain last summer, and as befitting one of our most constructive open side wing forwards, welded the Rags into an impressive running machine on the Hayward pattern. Many games resulted in over 40 points being scored. Unfortunately, crucial points were lost in the Silver Ball competition against Bargoed and Bridgend Sports which relegated us from final honours. The contribution of recent ex-Cardiff Youth players like Huw Jones, who has played several games for First XV, Gareth Luff, Tony Morgan, Ashley Ellison and David Miller has been noted, as has the good support of the Rags when they have played on the Arms Park. 'Newcomers Nick Ward' from Llandaff and Paul Elliot have made an immediate impact in their first seasons in the Club.

PLAYING RECORD:

Played 34 Won 29 Lost 3 Drawn 2 Points for 995
Points against 231

TOP TRY SCORERS:

Nick Ward 15, Derek Preece 14, Mervyn John 8, Lawrence O'Brien 8.

TOP POINTS SCORER:

Nick Ward with 144 points.

RAGS CAPS AWARDED TO:

Paul Elliot, Bob Newman, Julian O'Brien, Derek Preece, Nick Ward, Neil O'Donnell, Huw Jones, David Miller.

M. COLLINS, *Chairman*