

1907-08. P31, W26, L4, D1. Points 343—130.

This was another successful season although not a very high scoring one, only four matches were lost. The captain was one of Wales's great centre threequarters, Rhys Thomas Gabe who 'emigrated' from his village club, Llangennech, via the Llanelly Club with whom he gained seven of his 24 Welsh international caps, to join Cardiff in 1903 having obtained a post as 'maths' master at Cardiff Howard Gardens Higher Grade School. With Percy Bush, he had toured Australia/New Zealand with the British team of 1904, he was a member of three Triple Crown teams, and served Cardiff loyally for eight seasons. With Gwyn Nicholls, he formed probably the strongest centre threequarter partnership until challenged in the modern era by that of Jack Matthews and Bleddyn Williams from 1945-46.

It was Gabe's tackle of New Zealand's Bob Deans just short of the Welsh line which enabled Wales to hold on and win by one try to nil in the legendary match of December 1905. For many years after his retirement, Rhys Gabe was well known as a Rugby correspondent with the "Western Mail". Always fair minded as to the merits of past and present players, he was critical of those who failed in the simple basics, such as the giving and taking of a pass, critical too of those who took a long time in the preparation of kicks at goal, and, paraphrasing the golfing slow coach might say . . . "If you are going to miss then miss it quickly". He died at the age of 87 in September 1966 and in Cardiff's Ebenezer Welsh Chapel, at a bi-lingual funeral service, his many friends of the Rugby world bade farewell to a great Rugby sportsman. At the time of his death Gabe and Willie Llewellyn were the two last surviving members of the Welsh team which beat the All Blacks of 1905.

There was a very good run of fourteen wins in the first half of the 1907-8 season, Llanelly being the first team to beat us in our fifteenth match, at Stradey by merely one goal to one try, we lost by a similar score to Neath, and the strong Swansea Club beat us twice in close contests. All English clubs were beaten, including the Barbarians (twice), and our Irish friends of the Cork Constitution Club went under by 13 points to 3. Cecil Biggs had retired, and in December Dicky David our scrum-half "went North" and it was more than strongly rumoured that Tommy Vile of Newport would join us, but he remained loyal (and wise) to his own club. Randall Davies who succeeded David played well enough to gain his First XV cap for the season.

Our match with Blackheath at home on 25th January was notable for the fact that the Welsh M.P. Mr. David Lloyd George, then President of the Board of Trade, kicked off. Escorted to half-way by W. T. Morgan who advised him that "a mighty effort was needed of him", Lloyd George kicked ten yards directly into the hands of Rhys Gabe who instantly claimed a mark!! Rhys Gabe had two daughters, and of them it could perhaps be said,

in the parodied hymn of those days, that "Lloyd George knew my father". And yet another M.P. kicked off in a match on the "Park". This time it was Mr. John Redmond, the Irish M.P., who, incidentally, in World War I raised the 38th Ulster Division for the British forces. The occasion was on St. Patrick's Day 1908, and the match was between Billy Neill's Cardiff XV against a Rest of Wales XV, in aid of funds to reduce the debt of Catholic Schools in Cardiff.

Cardiff's top try scorers were J. L. Williams, R. A. Gibbs, and the captain who obtained thirteen, twelve and ten respectively. Randall Davies and George Yewlett the forward were each awarded 1st Team caps and blazers. Jim Casey and George Northmore each played 29 matches and Billy Neill and Joe Pugsley in 28. The Second XV had a results record identical with that of the First XV but with a higher scoring tally; their captain was W. A. Jones who with George McCraith was top try scorer with 19, followed closely with 18 from T. Flooks, 13 from T. Spencer and 10 from Johnny Thomas. Two records were set up on 14th March 1908, when, after the end of the Wales v. England international match on the Cardiff Arms Park, the Second XV defeated Usk by the record score of ten goals, nine tries, 77 points to nil, and George McCraith himself scored six tries and kicked ten converted goals to establish the club record of 38 points in one match, a record which stands today.

In the international scene, Wales won the Triple Crown for the fifth time, and Cardiff supplied seven players against England and Scotland, and five against Ireland and France, namely, H. B. Winfield, J. L. Williams, R. T. Gabe, R. A. Gibbs, P. F. Bush, John Brown (our vice-captain) and W. Neill. In the series Cardiff's players scored 60 out of the total of 81 Welsh points. R. A. Gibbs scored four tries against France, a feat enjoyed only by Willie Llewellyn in 1889, and by Maurice Richards of Cardiff, also against England seventy years later. Against France, Gibbs, already over the French goal line decided to try and score behind the posts, but a Frenchman "legged" him and he lost the ball—and a record of five tries in an international match!

The season's receipts totalled £4,536, and expenditure £3,735, which left a satisfactory carry forward of £801. The club was again very generous to charities, no fewer than thirteen bodies benefited, the largest donation was made to the Cardiff Royal Infirmary which received £262.10.0d., a handsome sum in those days. At the A.G.M. of 13th August 1908, the members were informed of the visit of the Australians the following season, and they were also told that this would be an "all pay" match (a new departure as far as they were concerned) and that this edict of the Welsh Rugby Union had to be accepted or else run the risk of losing a club match with the Australians.