

THE AUSTRALIANS ARRIVE

A VISITOR "SENT OFF"

1908-09. P31, W26, L3, D2. Points 372—138.

Percy Bush was elected captain, for the third time, and he appointed Sergeant Fred Smith of the Glamorgan County Police, a sterling forward as his vice-captain. R. A. Gibbs and J. L. Williams went on tour with the Anglo-Welsh in Australasia and did not turn out until November, Gabe, Ralph Thomas, "Billy" Neill, and Lew George had dropped out, but newcomers were Louis M. Dyke and W. "Billy" Spiller, with W. L. Morgan (brother to Dr. Teddy Morgan) at scrum half to partner the captain, and J. Daley and Frank Gaccon, forwards. The necessary team re-blending was reflected in the low rate of scoring in the first half of the season. Leicester (a) 7 points to nil, Swansea (h) 16-4, and Devonport Albion (a) 11-3 in the last but one match after a run of nineteen wins, were the only three clubs to defeat us. Newport were beaten three times (the fourth match was cancelled owing to frost and snow) and 'doubles' were gained over Bristol, Gloucester, Blackheath, Barbarians and Moseley on whose ground at the "Reddings" Percy Bush kicked six goals including one dropped, in Cardiff's win by 32 points to nil.

But the season 1908-9 was most notable for the match with Australian on 28th December and Cardiff's visit to France to play the Bordeaux Club, Stade Bordelais Université Club on 20th February. The Australians were thrashed by 24 points to 8, the

biggest defeat of their tour. Their forwards were a heavier lot than our own, who gave an excellent account of themselves, but it was the Cardiff backs who displayed the natural flair and expertise in attack with our captain Percy Bush in experienced control. In fact, it was the backs who scored all our points, Bush a dropped, penalty and converted goal, with tries from Louis Dyke, J. L. Williams (2), W. L. Morgan and Rhys Gabe. The game was marred by one regrettable incident as the Australian forward A. B. Burge was "ordered off" the field by the referee Mr. Gil Evans for quite brutally kicking Dai Westacott who was lying on the ground. Burge had already incurred displeasure on tour by his rough play at Plymouth, and in the Welsh match in which W. "Billy" Trew was the sufferer, a small but brilliant player. To date, but for our captain's singular lapse against the All Blacks of 1905, Cardiff would have achieved victories over the first four visiting colonial teams, e.g. The Maoris, 1888, one goal, one try to one try, The South Africans (1907) 17 points to nil, New Zealand (1905) 8 points to 10—lost instead of won, and now the Australians, by 26 points to 8. These encounters indicate the remarkable strength of Cardiff Rugby Club up to World War I.

The Stade Bordelais match involved the Cardiff party in five days' travel to France by train and boat from 10 a.m. Thursday 18th February until Monday 21st February 9 p.m. at Cardiff Station. The French club were quite a good one by French standards of the time, having won their championship six times out of eleven occasions, but Cardiff gave a splendid display to win the match by 21 points to 5 in which Gwyn Nicholls was made the hero having scored three tries. The club's expenditure of £264 on the trip was criticised at the following A.G.M., but the match was a stimulation to French Rugby and it added to Cardiff's prestige.

At the end of a very good season Cardiff finished up as the Welsh champions, a most gratifying performance for captain and club alike. W. Spiller and J. L. Williams with 16 and 15 tries respectively were the top scorers. Percy Bush dropped seven goals, a number equalled by Danny Davies in 1922-3, surpassed by Wilfred Wooller in 1937-39 and Barry John, 1967-8 and 1970-71. Jack Powell 29, J. Casey and Joe Pugsley each 28, W. Spiller 27, and Bush and J. L. Williams each with 26 made most appearances. First XV caps and blazers were voted to L. M. Dyke, W. Spiller, W. L. Morgan, Joe Daley, Frank Gaccon and Walter Casey. The Second XV, captain George Northmore and vice-captain George McCraith, played 29 games, won 19, lost 6 and drew 4, scoring 308 points to 78. With many changes, try scoring was not heavy but top scorers were T. Evans with seven, and W. A. Jones and T. Buck six each. Caps were voted to Con Scanlon, E. Lewis, E. Smith, Tom Evans, George Northmore and J. Groves.

Wales won its five internationals including Australia—"The Quintuple Crown", but Cardiff had only three participants, H. B. Winfield (Australia), John Brown (England) and J. L. Williams in all five matches.

The club did not benefit financially from the visit of the Australians as it had done from the visits of the New Zealanders and the South Africans, owing to the fact, that in order to allow our members free admission, the Australians insisted on increasing their share of gate to 70%. The club had 1,769 members. Overall receipts totalled £5,407, and expenditure £4,858, and out of the balance in hand £229 was donated to local clubs, schools and the District Union, but owing to the heavy expenditure on away matches, including of course, the matches in Bordeaux and Cork, only £33.2.0d. was given to charities, Italian Earthquake Fund, Docks Distress Fund, Waifs & Strays, University Settlement and Postal Telegraph.