

THE AUTHOR'S DEBUT

1920-21. P42, W24, L15, D3. Points 404-267.

J. C. M. Lewis was appointed captain, he nominated R. A. Cornish as vice-captain. Clem Lewis was one of the best outside-half backs of his time, a very neat and elusive player, nice looking and popular. He served the club well in the seasons 1909-10 to 1923-24, won eleven Welsh caps, was a Cambridge Blue and a Barbarian, and held, probably the most unique distinction of having played for his club, his varsity, and his country prior to and after World War I. His qualities deserved a better season's record than the actual results show, but injuries, international claims on his players, and perhaps a lack of possession and penetration in his team, led to us suffering 15 defeats, of which three were inflicted by Swansea, two by Newport, Aberavon and Cross Keys, and one each at the hands of the Barbarians, Bridgend, Llanelly, Leicester and Neath.

The Newport and Swansea clubs were strong, but it was Cross Keys who surprised, true however, "The Keys" had an excellent team including players of international calibre such as Freddie Reeves at half, Steve Winmill and Reg Hathaway at forward and B. O. Male at full-back, Male was later to join Cardiff, and they also had very good versatile backs in Bob and Sam Jones who were Cardiffians. Cross Keys won the un-official Welsh championship the following season. Our defeat at the hands of the Barbarians by two goals 10 points to one goal, 5, came as the result of a brilliant interception by A. T. Sloan of Scotland in his own twenty-five from a Cardiff passing movement, Sloan ran nearly the length of the field and planted the ball behind the posts for a conversion.

Some of our victories were poor crumbs of comfort, but we did record doubles over the United Services, Headingley and Blackheath, and beat up Pontypridd by 35 points to three on the day of the England/Wales international. The match was notable for the fact that the captain scored two tries and his brother, Ivor Lewis, making his first team debut in the centre, bagged four tries. But Cardiff's biggest "plum" was the victory over Newport on the Cardiff Arms Park on 2nd April by two goals, three tries, 19 points to nil, before a gate of some 35,000—such was Newport's drawing power. We had not beaten our rivals since the war and had only one victory in eight before it. The brilliant Arthur Cornish was still on crutches having broken his leg in the first five minutes of the match with Glamorgan League on Boxing Day. It was in this match with Newport that I made my debut for Cardiff, being allowed to do so by the Penarth Club for whom I was serving at outside-half. Cardiff's captain switched to centre three-quarter. It was a memorable day for me, it is still remembered by supporters of the older generation who kindly approach me from time to time, and "tell me all about it".

There were two other notable debuts, that of Tom "Codger" Johnson who also had played for the Penarth Club, and Cardiff born Jim "Buller" Sullivan a young but powerfully built full-back who played 35 matches and gained a First XV cap. Because of lack of employment young Sullivan turned professional with the Wigan Rugby League Club and became one of the greatest full backs in club and international Rugby League football, and noted all over the world for his prodigious kicking feats. Had he remained an amateur he would most probably have become Cardiff's greatest of all full backs.

Tom Johnson scored the most tries in 1920-21, a total of 16, Clem Lewis followed with 12, and 11 were obtained by R. A. Cornish. First XV caps were granted to Joe Dangerfield, a local wing who had a penchant for jumping over opponents' heads, Alf Payne, Tom Johnson, backs, and the forwards Jack Grant, T. J. Hopkins who emigrated to Canada, Llew Jenkins, D. Marsden Jones who later joined London Welsh, and Dai Miller. Perch Thomas, a docksman was captain of the Reserves whose record was P30, W17, L13 with 308 points to 185, but, like that of the First XV, not an inspiring record in this second season of re-building. The biggest wins were over Taffs Well, 39 points to nil, and Spillers & Bakers 21-0, and Ivor Lewis with eight tries was top scorer, forwards Phil Rowlands and Tom Watkins each got five, and a Frenchman named Fargues was credited with three.

In the cause of charity, the club staged three matches: Cardiff Past v. Present for the Lord Mayor's Unemployment Fund, Cardiff v. Newport for the Arthur Gould Memorial Fund to endow a bed at the Royal Gwent Hospital (Newport's ground record was taken) and Cardiff v. Internationals for the funds of King Edward VII Memorial Hospital; in the latter match three of Cardiff's old players officiated, Gwyn Nicholls as referee and R. T. Gabe and D. W. Evans as touch judges. On the day that Wales played Ireland on 12th March Walter Morgan, a former neat scrum half from Taffs Well, played in the 1st XV against Mountain Ash, dropping a goal, and also against Glamorgan Wanderers scoring a try. Subject for a "quiz"?