

THE MOST SOUGHT-AFTER TEAM IN THE BRITISH ISLES

W. E. TAMPLIN'S YEAR. RECORD CLUB GATE 48,500

THE AUTHOR IS DECORATED

1950-51. P45, W34, L6, D5. Points 480-192.

W. B. Cleaver was elected captain but shortly before the season commenced he notified the club that he would be retiring at the end of the 1950 Lions Tour. It came as a surprise and a shock, but 'came the day, came the man', W. E. Tamplin our great pack leader was appointed and he nominated Bleddyn Williams to be his vice-captain. Prior to the war in which he served as an army lieutenant, "Bill Tamp" was playing for Pontypool and joined Cardiff after his demobilisation. He made 252 appearances for his club in the period 1945-1953 and gained seven Welsh international caps. He was a great captain, a real leader who could inspire his team to greatness, a hard driver of his pack, at home in the second row or as a lock. A good reader of opposing teams, he was a scourge of any slacker in his own. He was one of the best goal kickers in Welsh Rugby and his boot earned his club many victories.

Tamplin had to face the season without five of the club's British Lions in New Zealand and he was without them until their re-appearance against Bridgend at home on 4th November. He had also lost two wings, Terry Cook and Russell Burn to the Rugby League code. But he had an intake of some excellent newcomers in Alun Thomas, Haydn Morris and Derek Murphy two wings; Glyn Llewellyn a centre and Hughie Greenslade the scrum half from Bridgend; and W. E. Davies a prop from Pencoed. But perhaps our best acquisition was the Irish international forward Des. J. O'Brien formerly of Old Belvedere and London Irish. O'Brien had already collected eleven out of his twenty-nine Irish international caps. After two seasons with the Rugby club he joined Cardiff's hockey club and played for Glamorgan in 1952-53. He left our district for Oxford where a son was born to his wife. The local press announcement wryly indicated that the offspring "*was unfortunately qualified for England.*" Much later, in 1966, O'Brien became hon. manager of the British Lions tour to New Zealand and was not afraid to become critical of certain aspects of rough play by the All Blacks and poor quality refereeing.

Alun Thomas came to us from Swansea, a most versatile threequarter and outside half, a most deceptive runner and a splendid touch-line and tactical kicker. He played 13 times for Wales and never once a bad one. He toured South Africa with the British Lions of 1955, has served the Welsh Rugby Union for many years and has the honour of being the hon. manager to the British Lions to South Africa for 1974.

1950-51 turned out to be one of the very rainiest of seasons, yet the record was an improvement on that of the previous one, except for the number of points scored, understandably owing to weather conditions. We lost to only four clubs, Coventry, Oxford University, Bristol (away matches) and to Newport three times. Newport were having a wonderful season, losing most narrowly to the English clubs Harlequins and Exeter only. Ken J. Jones, becoming Wales's famous international wing, captained Newport who, once again however, failed in its annual attempt to defeat Cardiff four times in one season as the fourth encounter at Newport was drawn at a penalty goal each, and it was Tamplin's penalty goal which saved his club the maximum stigma. The third match at Cardiff on 17th February was a tremendously exciting one and was played to a record crowd for a club match of 48,500, the gate takings being nearly £2,600.

On 8th March 1879 Cardiff played Newport in the South Wales Challenge Cup tournament. The match took place at Sophia Gardens before a record gate for the time. The takings for the match amounted to £72. More than 1,000 spectators from Newport were present to see their club win the match by one goal, two tries and four touches down to nil.

The February 1951 match was played under bitterly cold conditions, and in the second half, a cold and biting hailstorm descended upon the players who were forced to bend down in the cold to let the biting hailstones fall on their backs. The match was temporarily halted, and, as one of the touch-judges on the occasion, I was, in other vernacular terms, "frozen stiff". There was a pleasant sequel to the match as the Welsh Rugby Union sent letters to both clubs expressing its thanks and admiration for the sporting spirit in which the match was played, a fine example to all clubs exemplifying the splendid relationships between two of the world's greatest Rugby clubs. But television was not far away!

Swansea and Pontypool were two clubs over whom we scored 'double' victories, and for the second season in succession we took Pontypool's ground record. We had a splendid win over the Barbarians at Easter time and not one match was lost from 17th February to the end of the season. Very severe weather interfered with the club's rare two-match tour of the north. Our match with Northumberland was switched from Gosforth to North Shields, but this ground was almost like a rock, but rather than disappoint the crowd, both teams agreed to play a token game. We were able to play the Watsonians on 1st January and won the match by six points to nil.

Top scorers Haydn Morris 18 tries, Gareth Griffiths 11 and Derek Murphy 11, including three brilliant ones against Llanelli on 21st April. Alun Thomas and Bleddyn Williams bagged six each and our 'mountain' forward Malcolm Collins scored five. The captain's magnificent kicking brought him a total of 65 goals from conversions, penalties, drop, and mark, a total of 139 points. First XV caps were awarded to: W. E. Davies (23 appearances), Hughie Greenslade (23), Gwyn Llewellyn (23), Haydn Morris (25), Derek Murphy (36), Des O'Brien (17), Alun Thomas (15), C. D. Williams (24) and Glyn Williams the nippy wing (16). Six of our players won international caps, Jack Matthews, Bleddyn Williams, Cliff Davies, Rex Willis, Cliff Morgan—his first, against Ireland, and Haydn Morris, his first against France.

Cardiff Athletic XV. Stan Bowes, now regarded as one of our veterans was made captain. Stan had served the club since 1938-39 except for war service as a P/O in the Royal Navy. Stan was a popular choice, an excellent prop, final Welsh trialist, he was replete with choice naval and other adjectives with which to exhort his team, on, and off the field. Graham Budge, Scottish international and bosom pal of British Lion Cliff Davies played for Stan's XV against Newport H.S. Old Boys on the 30th December, and in his team against Blackwood on 28th October he had no fewer than four British Lions: Cliff Davies, Jack Matthews, Bleddyn Williams and Rex Willis. "The Rags" Played 31, Won 23, Lost 7 and Drew one, with 351 points to 156. Mike Evans scored 15 tries, nine came from J. B. Neagle, seven from D. J. James, six each were scored by Hugh Goodfield, Alan Greedy and C. D. Williams. J. E. G. "John" Llewellyn was top goal scorer with 31 in all and got a bonus of one try. Athletic XV caps were gained by E. M. Cooke 22 appearances—including 1st XV), F. C. Ferguson (20), Hugh Goodfield (20), Alan Greedy (26), Martin Harvey (22), Dafydd J. James (30), J. E. G. Llewellyn (33), Brian Mark (16), and Geoff Thorburn (23).

Cardiff Juniors XV. The team was captained by Bryn Mapstone with excellent results, the season's record being: Played 20, Won 17, Lost 2, Drawn 1, with 336 points to 72.

There were some interesting events during the season. A French referee M. Louis Murail of Nantes officiated in our match with London Welsh, the first Frenchman to do so on the Cardiff Arms Park. The Nantes club presented special medals to Jack Matthews and Bleddyn Williams in appreciation of their becoming British Lions and being life members of the Nantes club at the same time. A greater award was made to myself on the occasion of the France v. Wales match at Stade Colombes, Paris on 7th April 1951 when I was a member of the Welsh Rugby Football Union. In the Tribune, a gold medal was pinned on my breast by M. Andre Morice, Minister of Sport. on behalf of the French Government. It was the gold medal of "Education, Physique et Sport" and it was the first time this honour, recognizing my efforts for Anglo/French Rugby relations had been awarded to a foreign national.

In our coach on the way to Newport for the match with Cardiff on 11th November, Bleddyn Williams joined me and we discussed the offer of £6,000 made to him to turn professional with the Rugby League, a most tempting sum at that time. Apart from saying that the Cardiff Club would miss him greatly, and that the choice was strictly his to make, I expressed the view that in the long term there were important occupational and professional prizes to be gained as an amateur, broadcasting and writing for example. We are I suppose very glad that he stayed with his own amateur club Cardiff, he went on to win further honours; in 1953-54 he captained his club and, triumphantly led his team to defeat the All Blacks. Glory indeed.

During the season the first Old Players' Reunion took place. The museum was beginning to take shape, Hubert Johnson the Rugby club chairman taking a leading part. The management committee of the Cardiff Athletic Club reported that there was now some £24,000 in the clubhouse rebuilding fund, a new clubhouse was very much a need. There was some dalliance. The death was announced of Jack Powell our club masseur for many years. He served it well.

Seven-a-side. At the end of the season the Cardiff & District Rugby Union organised a seven-a-side tournament in connection with the Festival of Britain. The club entered three teams, a First VII, an Athletic VII and a team from its Juniors. The juniors put up a good performance but the final at Bute Park was between our 1st VII and the Athletic VII. In this there was excitement, banter and needle. Only 30 seconds from time the Athletic were leading by three points to nil, but Derek Murphy kicked a penalty goal to equalise, and in the extra time the seniors scored a try to win the tournament.

First Team VII—Frank Trott (capt.), Cliff Morgan, Alun Thomas, Derek Murphy, John Phillips, J. D. Nelson and E. M. Cooke.

Athletic team VII—Stan Bowes (capt.), W. Douglas, Geoff Beckingham, Hughie Greenslade, J. B. Neagle, Dafydd James and H. Goodfield.

"A very good evening" followed!