

VISITORS FROM BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN
CLIFF MORGAN'S SUCCESS IN SOUTH AFRICA
HOWELL LOVELUCK PADRE IN KENYA

1955-56. P52, W35, L16, D1. Points 612-360.

Malcolm Collins was elected captain and he nominated Dr. Gwyn Rowlands as his vice-captain. Malcolm had joined us from Newport in 1949-50 and gained his first team cap in that season. This 'gentle giant' of a man, standing 6 ft. 2 ins. in height and weighing more than 16 stone was a most popular leader who gained final Welsh trial and reserve for Wales honours. Full international honours eluded him although he was worthy of them.

Bleddyn Williams, the last of our brilliant post-war 'greats' had retired. Cliff Morgan was available for only eight matches, Stan Bowes had 'retired' to the "Rags" XV, and Rex Willis played in only 23 of the first team matches. Our first five matches were won, perhaps not too convincingly, the third of these was against Roumania from behind the Iron Curtain and we succeeded in a close struggle by six points to three, it was the only defeat suffered by Roumania on tour. There was much keenness in the game, these first visitors were all out to create an impression of their Rugby strength. France has helped in the development of Rugby football in Roumania and play regular matches on international level with that country the results of which are pretty close. Our gate totalled £2,981.

A disastrous period followed our five victories and we lost nine out of the next eleven games. Only by an almost superhuman effort did we prevent Newport beating us four times. We won the last encounter at Newport by a mere point—10 points to nine. In the first of the series at Cardiff, we led Newport after half time by six points when both Rex Willis and Gwyn Rowlands were hurt and we finished up with 13 men to lose 16-6. Unlucky perhaps, but there, only results count in records. We recovered our prestige however and lost only seven more matches.

Both Varsities defeated us and could field strong fifteens. Cambridge included A. R. Smith, A. A. Mulligan, W. R. Evans and R. W. D. Marques, all destined to play for their respective countries, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and England. Smith had already been capped for his country and took part in the Lions tour of 1955. One of our players, Alan Barter was also in the Light Blues team. Oxford included against us M. J. K. Smith and Onllwyn Brace at half back, R. H. Davies, J. D. Currie and P. G. D. Robbins, forwards, soon to become international stars. London Welsh and Ebbw Vale gained rare victories as did the Harlequins on Easter Monday, we had drawn with the Barbarians but defeated Northampton on the Tuesday. It was not the usual profitable Easter period. We were successful on our French tour defeating Stade Nantais at Nantes and Paris University and on our Cornish tour of three matches with Plymouth Albion, Penzance-Newlyn and St. Ives; we ended up with a flush of five convincing wins over Gloucester 11-3, Leicester 20-5, Pontypool 16-8, Bridgend 13-0 and Aberavon 13-3.

The season's top scorers were Gwyn Rowlands 24 tries and 28 goals—136 points, Ken Richards 9 tries and 34 goals—117 points, Gordon Wells 20 tries, Howard Nicholls 18 and Derek Murphy 16. Club caps were gained by D. J. Dodd, Malcolm Gough, Glyn John and Eddie Lewis. The captain played in 50 of the season's fixtures, and five players took part in 40 or more, namely J. D. Evans 46, Colin Howe 45, Eddie Lewis 43, Alan Priday 42 and Geoff Beckingham in 40. C. L. Davies gained his three Welsh caps, Gwyn Rowlands played against France and Cliff Morgan gained the supreme honour of captaining Wales in her four matches. On the successful Lions tour of 1955, Cliff captained the tourists at Pretoria in the third test when they defeated the Springboks by nine points to six. Joy indeed! Bleddyn Williams had similar success over the Australians on the 1950 Lions Tour. At Nairobi for the last match of the Lions tour against an East African XV we were given private hospitality as opposed to staying in an hotel. Cliff Morgan, Haydn Morris and I stayed in the lovely home of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Bryant. Arthur Bryant (always called Pat by me) was an official of the East African Rugby Union and had refereed for that body—in a Blue and Black jersey—until his retirement with the whistle at about 63 years of age. In his very young days, prior to World War I he had played for Penarth and in a few matches for Cardiff Reserves.

We were privileged to meet there Captain Howell Loveluck who had played for Cardiff in the period 1939/40-1949/50. He was now chaplain to H.M. Forces in Kenya—in the time of the Mau Mau troubles.

Cardiff Athletic XV had an excellent season, P39, W29, L4, D6 with 571 points to 184. Peter Goodfellow had been appointed captain, but his services were such that he was required to play for the first team on no fewer than 33 occasions, and Stan Bowes took over the captaincy of "The Rags". Six of the fixtures were cancelled by bad weather, mainly frost and snow, nevertheless it was quite a strong fixture list and the only defeats were by Ogmores Vale 14-3, Newport United 9-8, Bristol United 5-3 and Barry by 20 points to 16. Brian Joseph was top scorer with 16 tries, R. J. Parsons got 14, Ron Mustard 12 and Colin Hewitt 10. John Llewellyn kicked 27 goals, J. M. Fitzgerald 17 and got four tries, Derek Davies playing at full-back kicked 16. The recipients of Athletic caps were Derek Davies, Henry Jacobs, Kingsley Jones, Brian Joseph and B. Sadler. Most appearances: T. J. McCarthy 29, J. Crothers 27, S. Bowes 27, F. C. Ferguson and R. Parsons each 25, Brian Joseph 23, J. M. Fitzgerald 21, B. Sadler and Lloyd Williams 20.

Cardiff Junior XV had a most successful season, having played 28, won 24, drawn 3 and lost 1, with 473 points to 78. Under John Heron's captaincy the Juniors were undefeated in Wales. They added to their laurels by winning the Cardiff & District Youth Sevens—for the second season running. Ken Leonard played against France and Germany.

At the very end of the season and at rather short notice, a match was arranged with a New Zealand Navy XV at the Arms Park. The Kiwis were more than delighted to play on our historic ground and although they went down by 40 points to 10 in a somewhat hilarious match, the after-proceedings of the evening in the old clubhouse were most enjoyable and there were many repeats of the Haka Warrior Dance by Maori members of the crew who tried to gather in some of our own players, including our skipper Malcolm Collins, to learn it. A ship's plaque adorns our clubhouse together with a Maori spear.

The Welsh Rugby Union celebrated its 75th anniversary at the Cardiff Arms Park on 22nd October 1955 with a match between Wales and the British Lions touring team of 1955. I was asked by the Welsh Rugby Union whilst I was in South Africa to organise the Lions XV. It was a task I undertook with some pride and not a little pleasure.

On the occasion of the Wales v. Scotland match on 4th February 1956, the extension to the south stand—the addition of which is called the south upper stand, was formally opened, thus increasing the seating capacity to 12,800 and in the ground overall to 60,000. The project cost approximately £60,000 and a quarter of the cost was met by the Cardiff Athletic Club. In June 1956 our new club house was opened. Our spacious long bar on the first floor looked a splendid picture. Alas, in the course of its usage, there were pessimists who thought it would become a gin palace and lose some of the club's character—most unfair criticism. But we did lose in the course of time some of our old traditional Rugby members. In practical use it has been of the utmost value.

Obituary. Several well known sporting personalities passed away, some of them suddenly. D. Bernard Morgan who had been the past chairman of the Cardiff Athletic Club management committee and had taken a most active and distinguished part in the building up of the Cardiff Athletic Club from its very formation in 1920-1922. Jim Batstone died, he had given most of his lifetime in the service of the club as a player and administrator. The Welsh Rugby Union also suffered in the death of Eric Evans who was the secretary of the W.R.U. For a time, until a new secretary was appointed (Mr. W. H. Clement), Mr. Brice Jenkins acted as the Welsh Union's administrator. It was a most unfortunate tragedy that Brice Jenkins who was until last season the Rugby Club's hon. secretary, was not re-elected to the club committee. Having worked closely together for many years I can say that he was the most efficient of secretaries, a civil servant of standing and universally respected. He loved the Cardiff Rugby Club and protected its good name. No subsequent hon. secretary has equalled his capabilities and dedication to our Rugby club's affairs. Sid Judd became a member of the committee for 1955-56, he was fighting for good health.