

WE ARE MASSACRED BY THE BARBARIANS,

1956-57. P50, W36, L12, D2. Points 627-346.

Peter Goodfellow one of the club's best uncapped back row forwards was the popular choice as captain and he nominated Gareth Griffiths as his deputy. A most loyal player, he served well for eleven seasons and took part in 240 first team matches. He had captained the Athletic XV for two seasons. A notable newcomer was W. R. 'Roddy' Evans the Cambridge Blue forward, a great lock, over sixteen stone and standing 6 ft. 4 ins. He was to gain thirteen Welsh caps and a tour with the British Lions to New Zealand and Australia in 1959, and a Barbarian tour to South Africa and East Africa in 1958. It was a most interesting season, an arduous one which promised well and we were unbeaten after eighteen matches until we met Swansea (A) on 1st December to lose by six points to three.

Germany were met at the Arms Park on the opening match of the season. They included a number of quite blonde performers but they lacked the finesse of the experienced clubmen by our own standards. They played a very clean and sporting game and held us to two penalty goals at half time, but Cardiff's superior knowledge and skill told in the end and we won by 25 points to nil. The match with the Italians on 3rd October was a less spectacular game, a dour struggle in fact. They appeared to be more experienced than the earlier German visitors. There was quite a bit of mauling and 'odd' tackling and other mis-application to the rules, but after quite a hard struggle we triumphed by eight points to three.

Led by Dr. Louis Babrow the former Springbok, a tour to Britain was made by the South African Universities, mainly from Cape Town and Stellenbosch. The visitors proved themselves very well coached in the arts of Rugby and put up quite a struggle at the Arms Park when we met them in a mid-week game. They had defeated Newport, narrowly, and we won our match with them on 9th January by 18 points to eight.

Our best successes were obtained in the first half of the season. We beat Bridgend 28 points to 5, Swansea by 24-6 and Halifax in a sporting encounter by 36 points to 14. We beat both Oxford and Cambridge Universities, 'Roddy' Evans making his debut against Oxford on 3rd November—a Welsh trial date when we were without Cliff Morgan, Gareth Griffiths, Howard Nicholls and Gordon Wells. On 8th December, another Welsh trial date, Peter Goodfellow was captain of the Whites selection, and in all nine of our players were engaged in both teams (Reds v. Whites), and on the same day, what was practically a reserve fifteen played the Harlequins in London and gave a splendid performance, losing by only 17 points to 11.

In Scotland on tour to play Glasgow High School F.P. on New Year's Eve, and the Watsonians next day, we lost surprisingly to the former by a point 9-8; five days later we went down to Moseley by 13 points to 11, on the final Welsh trial date. We had two wins and one drawn game with Newport. In the second encounter at Cardiff we scraped home very late in the game by a point: at Newport in March the Usksiders scored 10 points in the last three minutes. These two matches were described as the most exciting ones seen for many years. We scored doubles over Bridgend, Coventry and Gloucester but we were to suffer great humiliation at Easter time losing all three matches—to Barbarians, Harlequins and Northampton. On only one occasion before had we lost all three Easter programme matches, in 1934-35, to the Baabaas, 'Quins and Coventry.

At the hands of the Barbarians we suffered the heaviest defeat in our history, five goals, five tries—40 points to an abysmal nothing. It was a massacre no less. True we were without Cliff Morgan, Gareth Griffiths and Gordon Wells, Viv Jenkins of the "Sunday Times" wrote: "These three were mute, and doubtless tormented witnesses in the grandstand, at their clubmates' annihilation". They were to accompany the Barbarian touring party to Canada the following Wednesday. The Barbarians' committee fully expected that the three players would be chosen by Cardiff to play against them on that Easter Saturday, but for reasons of their own the Cardiff selectors did not call upon them. Cardiff's backs hardly got into the game at all and in the end our forwards, frustrated perhaps by some atrociously weak defence, tired. The Barbarians ran at us—and through us, time and time again playing in the modern parlance "fifteen man" Rugby of sustained brilliance. The teams were as follows:—

CARDIFF—A. Friday. Ken Richards, Howard Nicholls, Peter Nyhan and R. J. Parsons. Colin Hewitt and Lloyd Williams. Colin Howe, G. Beckingham, J. D. Evans, W. R. Evans, M. Collins, Eddie Thomas, P. Goodfellow (capt.) and J. D. Nelson.

BARBARIANS—Terry Davies. A. R. Smith, A. J. O'Reilly, R. R. Winn, P. H. Thompson. D. G. Baker and A. A. Mulligan. C. R. Jacob, Eric Evans, G. W. Hastings, R. H. Williams, R. W. D. Marques, P. D. Robbins, Rees Stephens and A. Robson. Referee: G. J. Treharne. Scorers: A. R. Smith (3 tries), O'Reilly and Thompson, 2 each, Hastings, Winn and Mulligan. Goals: D. G. Baker (3), Terry Davies (2).

After-match enquiries from members, press and public such as "was this our biggest defeat Danny?" served only to increase the agony of mind. But I found solace in the official club records which show that on Boxing Day 1903-04 season (there were two annual fixtures in those days) Cardiff defeated the Barbarians by six goals (one dropped), four tries 41 points to one try 3 points. Gwyn Nicholls our great captain scored three of the tries. On 27th December 1910 we won by ten tries, 30 points to nil, not one converted. R. A. Gibbs bagged four tries.

Top scorers: tries, Gareth Griffiths and Glyn John 18, Howard Nicholls 14, Gordon Wells 11, Alan Friday kicked 64 goals and got three tries for a total of 158 points. Six of the players made 40 or more appearances: Peter Goodfellow 48, J. D. Evans 46, Colin Howe 45, G. Beckingham and Eddie Thomas 43 and M. Gough 40.

Honours: First XV caps went to W. R. Evans and Lloyd Williams. Welsh caps were awarded to Cliff Morgan, Gareth Griffiths, Gordon Wells and Lloyd Williams who gained his first against Scotland. Lloyd had his best season to date with the club, proving his versatility by playing in both half-back positions, and partnering Cliff Morgan after Rex Willis was crocked against Swansea on 10th October and had played in only nine club matches. Lloyd in fact made 37 appearances.

Two floodlight matches were played. The first was on the Bristol City Association Football Club's ground at Ashton Gate where we met the Bristol Rugby Club and defeated them by 20 points to 13. J. B. G. Thomas of the "Western Mail" wrote that it was "A brilliant display of exhilarating open Rugby football in the highest traditions of the two clubs and crowned the Bristol Rugby venture into the floodlit world." We also played the Harlequins again at the White City, London, winning narrowly by 8 points to 6.

The Welsh Rugby Union staged a special match on the Cardiff Arms Park on 6th April between a Welsh XV and an International XV. The proceeds of the match, over £13,000, was handed over to the fund for the promotion of the forthcoming Empire & Commonwealth Games.

Our Roumanian tour was undertaken in May/June of 1957, the party being in charge of our officials W. B. Cleaver, Maldwyn James and Hubert Johnson. We were the guests of the Roumanian Rugby Federation. Two matches were played—against very tough opposition which had been given ample time for coaching and pre-match training. The first match was played against Bucharest "A" and we lost by 6 points to 3 at "August 23 Stadium". The second match with Bucharest "B" at the Republic Stadium was won by 9 points to 6. A gate of 80,000 watched the first encounter. There appeared to be some suggestion of shadowing during the visit but the hospitality of the Roumanian Rugby Federation and that of the British Embassy, left nothing to be desired. The behaviour of our "ambassadorial" party was very good.

The Athletic XV was captained by F. C. Ferguson and played 32, Won 21, Lost 8 and Drew 3, scoring 465 points to 183. Some very good wins were achieved over Kenfig Hill 27-3, Treorchy 32-3, Gloucester 26-0, Totnes 32-3 and Wrexham 24-11. The captain made most appearances—in 29 matches, Brian Sadler 24, Stan Bowes 22 and Kingsley Jones 21. Top try scorers were Derek Murphy and R. J. Parsons 16, C. L. Davies 9, Colin Hewitt 8 and Kingsley Jones and Ken Richards seven each. Athletic caps were awarded to Cenydd Williams and Glyn Williams.

The Junior XV was captained by the tough and aggressive scrum half Graham Buck. It enjoyed a very successful season losing only one match to a very tough Aberavon Youth team out of a total of 27 matches 24 were won and two drawn. Good attacking football brought the Juniors a total of 475 points with only 68 against. The captain A. Williams and Peter Thomas played for the Welsh Youth against Germany. Our Youth were now a proving ground.

The new clubhouse: the balance sheet of the Cardiff Athletic Club showed that the cost of its building and equipping was £34,366 and that the Glamorgan County Cricket Club made an interest free loan of £6,000, and they were in no hurry to have the loan repaid. The bar takings amounted to £25,149 compared with £14,804 in the previous year. Donations of £350 were made to the Cardiff & District Rugby Union, £100 to the Cardiff Schools R.U., and £50 to the Cardiff & District Youth Rugby Union.

Obituary: one of the stalwarts of the past, W. J. Jenkins, captain of the club for 1913-14 passed away. He kept in close contact with the club after his playing days and at every Easter Monday for many years he was always in the company of the great English three-quarter Adrian Stoop of the Harlequins. Regrettably too, our great friend from the Nantes club, Henri Picherit, died. We had very close contact together since 1945 and were mainly responsible for the Cardiff/Nantes happy association. He was a grand chap, good organiser, one who did much for the cause of Rugby football in Wales and in France for the French Rugby Federation. Two of our well known vice-presidents of the Cardiff Athletic Club, Mr. W. H. Bowcott and Alex Calder also passed away. Both were characters of the past, great supporters of our old established Rugby club.