

## A brief 'Golden Age': Jesus Rugby, 1969-1973.

The College, perhaps fittingly for what was for centuries 'Oxford's Welsh College', is not short of tradition and heritage on the rugby front. Some 145 years ago another from my home club - or at least town - Rhymney, and Jesus, who like me failed to get a Blue but, unlike me, then obtained two Welsh caps, was WF 'Bill' Evans. He taught at Sherborne, Cheltenham and in the Dominions but died a pauper's death in Cardiff: another achievement I have mercifully yet to emulate.

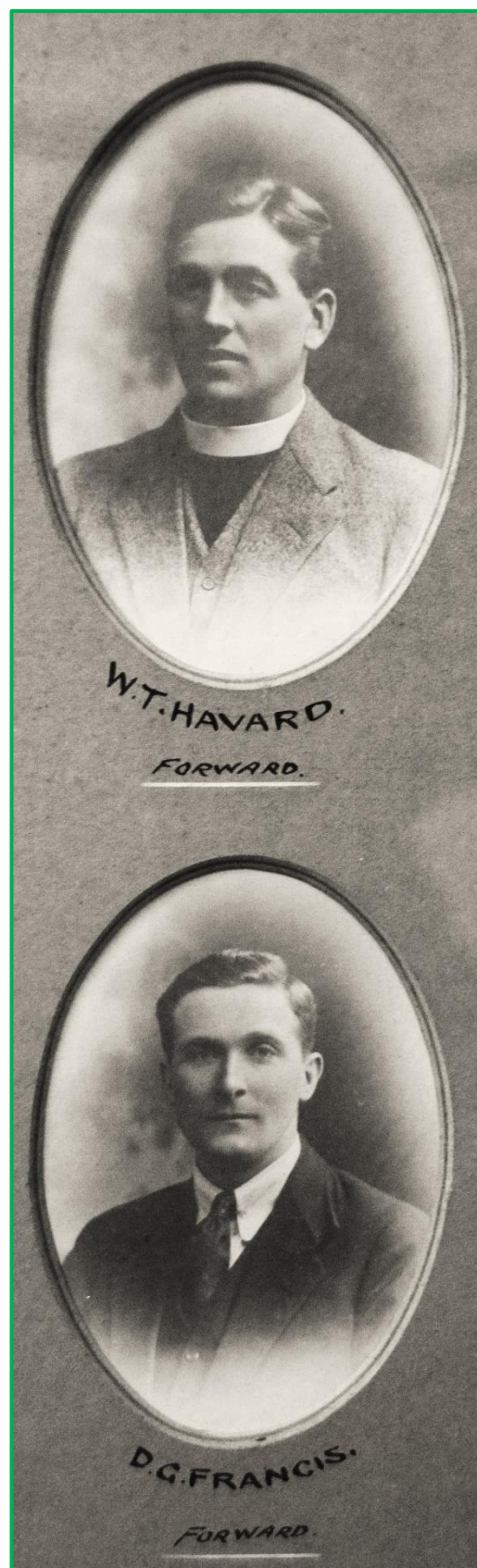
While providing several Blues down the decades, Jesus has rarely been a prolific rugby college, but was justly proud of those who went on to gain international honours. In recent years a *Jesus College Record* article usefully sought to enumerate them, and certainly the likes of bishop-to-be WT 'Bill' Havard and Gwyn Francis, 1920 teammates, the great VGJ 'Viv' Jenkins, 1938 British Lion and in the 1950s Trevor Brewer, later London Welsh skipper, brought honour to the college as well as themselves and their country.

One who gained no great rugby honour, but certainly distinction for bravery and recovery was Angus Buchanan, Monmouth School product and promising player and rower whose World War One exploits brought him a Victoria Cross - but also blindness, from one of his injuries. He returned to row again but his rugby was confined to touchline support for the College. He unveiled the war memorials at both Jesus and Monmouth School.

1920 saw the only occasion when Jesus have won Cuppers, the Hilary Term highlight at Iffley Road. No college sides came closer to emulating the feat, though, than those of the early 1970s. Our XV won the League three times on the trot and reached a trio of Cuppers Finals: but lost them all, each time to those oval-ball specialists from Teddy Hall!

When my Pengam schoolmate Haydn Walters and I came up in October 1969 we found a spirited side under the enthusiastic prompting of skipper Peter May - 'Craven A' to those in the know - and in the seasons that followed we gelled into a winning and very happy combination.

**1920 stars**



In later skippers Graham Pimlott (centre) and Gareth Rees (hooker) we had two very 'solid citizens' – quite different in type but equally bent on success. The core of the side was to stay together for over three years and we had good reserves, too. The 'Jesus spirit' was evident and infectious and locals at Stow (where Yorkshire 'Jumbo Jet' wing Tim Slater's family were prominent) survived with us one of the coldest matches in UK rugby history and then the boiling-water communal bath - the ref blew up early and the cold water was yet to be added!

We particularly enjoyed a tour to Gareth's Cardigan stamping ground and Tenby, where our post-match activities and songs ancient, modern, sacred and profane went down as well as they did in porter John Ryan's college bar. The ageless John always played, too, in the annual matches v the All-Stars – the 'Old Boys'.



### *College v the All Stars, 1970: and those 'lucky' shorts!*

Then, as I presume now, the responsibility was very much the students' own. Organisation, selection, training, travel, kit was all your own to do, though of course the fine facilities at Bartlemas Lane, the work of groundsman Alf Toombs and the memorable pavilion teas of Mrs Alf were much appreciated. So were the large hot baths of the 'Palace', then situated below a Third Quad staircase, after a walk down from the Parks on an autumn Wednesday teatime after a (League!) win over Teddy Hall. Haydn didn't enjoy his supposed Cuppers clash with British Lion-to-be Peter Dixon, mark you.... Anyway, 'two anchovy toast, please, Pam'!

Our League record and reputation grew, handy newcomers slotted in and we paid many a cheerful midweek visit to the bars of defeated opponents, in the usual pattern of the time. Talented goal-kicking fly half Bobby Upton formed an ex-Cardiff High School half back pairing with the magnificently reliable Chris Hicks, and before one Cuppers final Bob's shorts, superstitiously left tattered, gained deliberate publicity as 'Grim Ron' (Oxford Mail sports man Ron Grimshaw, the 'kiss of death' to many an aspiring Blue) was fed stories of their



mystical properties 'derived from a Celtic Merlin set on Jesus success'. Alas, St Edmund Hall left those hopes in similar tatters - on St David's Day as well, once, just to rub it in!



*Hicks' fine pass evades a tackler – from Keble, maybe?*



*...and did Atkinson pass to Pimlott?*

Many of that vintage will perhaps still possess the Jes Rugby Tie we had especially struck, aware those three or four years would prove worthy of recall. The dates are joined by a lobster - you may know the appropriate song - and a sheep, about which Bill Harris (the original definition of 'burly') and I (unburly!) wrote a multi-versed ditty, in the wooden phone box near the Ship St Gate before some function or other. We had splendid such 'affairs', which the sadly-missed Dr John Walsh was pleased to attend - and he often watched us, too.

One who 'guested' for us (incidentally, Ken Guest, quiet chemist prop, is one of very few from our sides still on the Jesus 'list of the lost') or maybe just opposed us 'vigorously' was the tragically-taken soldier Bob Nairac GC, of Lincoln, and the odd non-Jes Scot also joined our principally English, Welsh and South African/Zambian group, comprising a fine mix of public and grammar school products throughout this mini-era.



The necessarily cyclical nature of college sport, with the constant arrival and departure of players, has meant that only those colleges with a very strong tradition in and careful nurturing of a particular sport, with consequent 'pull' for potential entrants, are likely to produce consistent excellence. Teddy Hall could always 'bring back their Blues' in Hilary Term for the Cup: we had no Blues to bring back!



We did, though, have a lot of good players and characters. I will doubtless omit some (sorry!) but John Clements was pun-meister supreme, the urbane Duncan Hunter and pugilist Graham Ward (captain of boxing) were lofty locks who went on to be substantial 'somethings in the City' and beyond, Craig Wilson and Bryan Bowers made their marks in the USA, Ed (now Baron) Faulks, brother of Sebastian, became a government minister and Ed Garnier a veteran Tory MP. Dick Ley briefly taught Theresa May and skippers May (no relation!), Pimlott and Rees were to make respectively a noted Head, a CBE and a Cardiff Professor.

Steve O'Flaherty had a long diplomatic career, while the sadly-missed Tim Slater for some

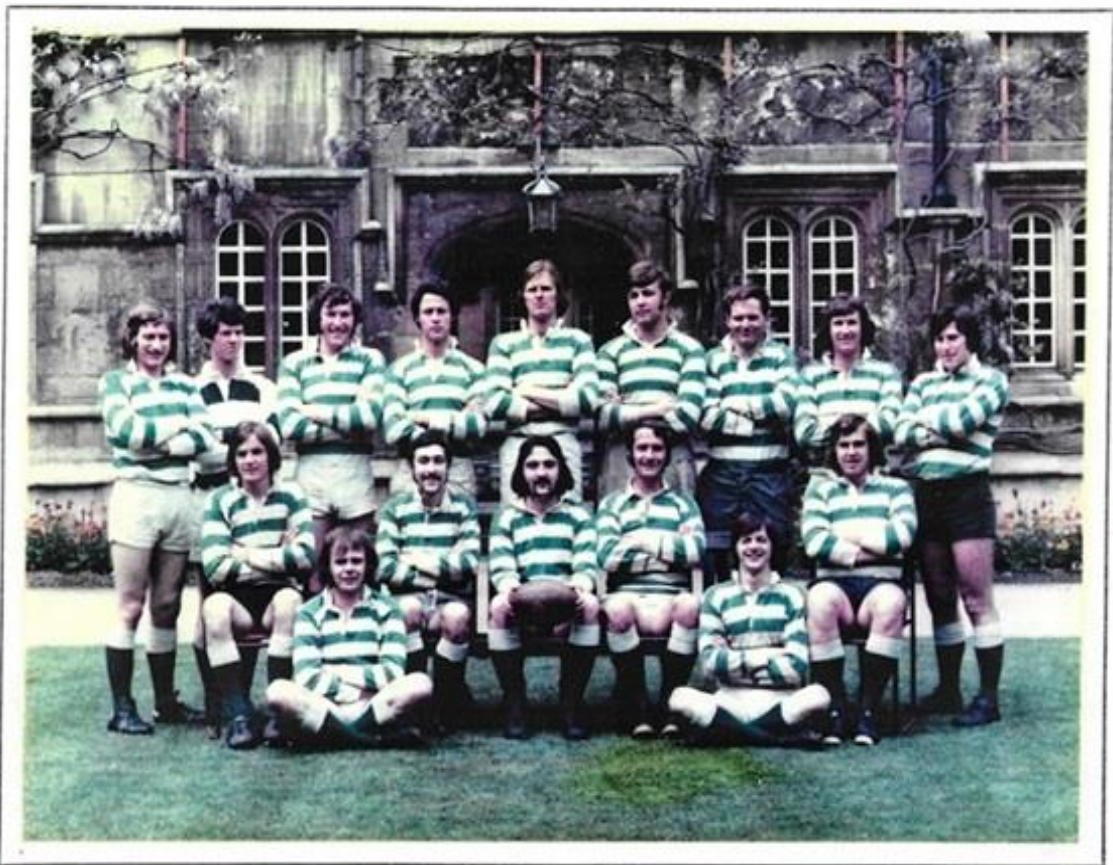


years ran his own 'Yorkshire Gaudy', which did not require the services of his 'Acme Security' operations provided at Jesus College Balls! Nik Coupland was another Cardiff Professor, Haydn Walters likewise in medicine in Australia, while the ebullient Peter Burley came the other way, to posts in Scotland and France.

Sid Lockett was a South African who knew some of the 1969-70 Springboks, Jerry Haile was to take his African mining expertise worldwide and those Cardiff half-backs 'accounted' for their future success. The recently-deceased Paul Heward was a popular, gentlemanly figure and Chris Parry CBE's naval exploits and writings on Falklands helicoptering etc. saw him rise to Rear Admiral and to broadcasting familiarity.

Bill Harris was long Pontypridd RFC's team doctor and Emyr Daniel led HTV Wales before a sadly early death, while many of these were present at the memorable 1981 Centenary Dinner of the Jesus College RFC, addressed by that 1930's Blue, Cap and doyen of rugby writers, Vivian Jenkins.

Jesus College 1<sup>st</sup> Rugby XV 1972  
League Winners.      Cuppers Finalists.



GILLMAN & SOAME

OXFORD

- PARMSTRONG - SJ O'FLAHERTY - B BOWERS - A WILSON - DR HUNTER - GNC WARD - J NASH - J P HALE - CHRIS. H. HICKS -
- MCWILSON - EH WALTERS - G MREES (capt) - RAUPTON - G PIMLOTT -
- J CLEMENTS -
- P TATKINSON -

Mercifully, good staged photographs of these storied sides were taken and survive, and one or more hung for years on the wall of the White Horse, the Blackwell's-enveloped Broad Street pub favoured, along with the once-famed Turl, by Jesubyte rugbyites. It was almost visible in one episode of TV's 'Inspector Morse'. I wish it had been: it is there no more.

For the benefit of those still nearer a first flush of youth, I have been wisely advised to add a few points of clarification and context regarding our record. Chris Hicks: *'My recollection (not wholly confirmed by partial fixture cards) is that between 1970 and 72 we were unbeaten apart from Richmond, Tenby (a) and Teddy Hall twice. The losses on the lists were 2nd XV fixtures. It was an amazing record: younger alumni should understand that 'XV' meant just that, 15 players and no substitutes: I was off against Richmond, we were down to 12 at the*


*end against Corpus and John Clements was off against London Welsh Druids or was it Dragons – and did we win both....?'*

In 1973 I was called back from PGCE teaching practice (en route to history teaching, headship and rugby history writing) for a third Cuppers final 'bash', but - pity! - couldn't prevent Teddy Hall's hat-trick. 'Not that we are bitter....!'

**RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB**  
1970-1971  
**FIXTURES**

Oct. 17 Sat.	Stow-on-Wold ...	W	H 25-14
20 Tues.	University II (L) ...	W	A 17-8
21 Wed.	Merton (L) ...	W	H 28-3
24 Sat.	Churchill, Cambridge ...	W	H 18-0
27 Tues.	Keble (L) ...	L	H 9-14
28 Wed.	University (L) ...	W	A 14-0
31 Sat.	University Hall, Buckland ...	W	A 9-0
Nov. 3 Tues.	Oriel (L) Pembroke ...	W	H 54-0
4 Wed.	B.N.C. (L) ...	W	A 17-0
7 Sat.	Swindon College ...	W	H 73-0
10 Tues.	St. Peter's II (L) ...	W	A 56-0
11 Wed.	Exeter (L) ...	W	H 40-0
14 Sat.	Sandhurst II ...	W	A 16-6
17 Tues.	Christ Church II (L) ...	A*	
18 Wed.	Christ Church (L) ...	W	A 21-6
21 Sat.	Stow-on-Wold ...	W	A 33-0
24 Tues.	St. Catz (L) ...	W	H 74-0
25 Wed.	St. Peter's (L) ...	W	H 32-0
28 Sat.	I.C.I. Fibres ...	W	H 25-8
Dec. 1 Tues.	B.N.C. II (L) ...	A*	
2 Wed.	S.E.H. (L) ...	W	A 6-0

\* 2nd Team Fixtures  
(L) = League



**RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB**  
1970-1971  
**FIXTURES**

Jan. 23 Sat.	Cowbridge Grammar ...	H	
25 Mon.	Magdalen (Cuppers Rd. I) ...	W	H 51-0
30 Sat.	Sidney Sussex (Cambridge) ...	W	A 30-3
Feb. 1 Mon.	Cuppers (Rd. II) Corpus ...	W	A 14-11
3 Wed.	Ox. Tech. ...		
6 Sat.	Scotland v. Wales ...		
8 Mon.	Cuppers (Rd. III) St. Peter's ...	W	H 11-3
13 Sat.	Ireland v. England ...		
15 Mon.	Cuppers (Semi-Final) ...		
20 Sat.	Smiths, Cheltenham ...	W	A 9-3
22 Mon.	Cuppers (Spare Day) Merton ...	W	12-9
24 Wed.	R.A.F. Little Rissington ...	W	H 28-7
27 Sat.	England v. France ...		
1 Mon.	Cuppers Final S.E.H. ...	L	9-23
Mar. 3 Wed.	R.A.F. Brize Norton ...	L	H 0-12
6 Sat.	All Stars ...	H	
9 Tues.	Cuppers Final ...		

**RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB**  
1971-72

Jan. 22 Sat.	London Welsh ...	H	Points For Against
29 Sat.	Churchill, Cambridge ...	A	
Feb. 5 Sat.	R.A.F. Brize Norton ...	A	
16 Wed.	R.A.F. Little Rissington ...	H	
19 Sat.	R.A.F. Brize Norton ...	H	
Mar. 1 Wed.	Imperial Col., London ...	H	
4 Sat.	All Stars (Pres. J. Clements) ...	H	

\* 2nd XV also playing

**Cuppers**

Jan. 24 Mon.	1st Round Worcester	15 - 10
Feb. 7 Mon.	2nd Round University	10 - 9
14 Mon.	3rd Round Christ Church	
21 Mon.	Semi-Final Hertford	7 - 0

Final to be arranged. St. Edmund H.

**BADMINTON CLUB**

Jan. 18 Tue.	Worcester	
25 Tue.	Trinity*	
28 Fri.	St. Catz	
Feb. 11 Fri.	Oriel*	
14 Mon.	Christ Church	

\* 2nd Team Fixtures

All matches at 1 p.m. at Ifley Road Gymnasium.  
Cuppers — Played in last 3 weeks of Term.





That was long ago - half a century - and much changes. I was crushed to see that Elmer Cotton's legendary sports shop no longer exists at the Turl/Broad corner. I wish, too, that gaudies were grouped in adjacent years, so that teammates over, say, a three-year spread could more easily meet a greater number of their fellows: since they were, for us, most enjoyable seasons in the green and white hoops, remembered with pleasure and laughter: may they come again for current and future Jesus men – and lately, women, too. Now, where's that tie...?

*Thanks to Chris Hicks & John Clements for date, fixture & photo assistance and advice.*

***Phil Atkinson** (Mod. Hist, 1969;  
Pres, Jesus Coll All-Stars, 1972-3; Editor, The Rugby Memorabilia Society)*