



Llandovery RFC article
In Welsh Rugby magazine, Feb 1968

FEBRUARY 1968

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WELSH RUGBY—FEBRUARY

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LLANDOVERY

MOVE TOWARD A CENTURY OF RUGBY

For more than ninety years Llandover has been a rugby bastion deep in rural Carmarthenshire. A County steeped in the tradition of the game and a breeding ground of generations of famous players. It is not possible to ascertain with certainty the exact birth of Llandover Town Rugby Football Club. Some quarters believe that the club started in 1870 whilst others feel it was later.

Existing records of Swansea R.F.C. do show however that organised football in Llandover was underway as early as 1874. The famous St. Helen's Club was founded in 1872 under Association rules but as there was no great enthusiasm for the game the rules of rugby football were adopted and their first match under the new code was against Llandover, on a field near the top of Mount Pleasant, Swansea, being successful by two goals to nil.

It is said that the first rugby ball was brought back from Blackheath by DROVERS who were engaged in driving cattle from this part of West Wales to London. In the middle of the nineteenth century Llandover was the rendezvous for the collection of cattle from the surrounding district as well as from Cardiganshire and Pembrokeshire and it is possible that drovers did bring back rugby footballs to stimulate interest amongst a scattered rural population which hitherto had been addicted to playing a rough boistrous game of the medieval type now only played in Derbyshire on Shrove Tuesday.

Around the late 1860's football was frowned on by a strong Puritan element within the Town, a known fact as some of the older residents used to recall that the young men, many of whom were drovers who had witnessed organised rugby at Blackheath (the third oldest club in England being founded in 1858) in order to avoid offending these susceptibilities used to assemble on a field called 'Cae Glas y Bwci' on moonlit nights!

There are other wonderful tales of the efforts of players both on and off the field who in the days of yore downed the Llandover jersey. One in particular is worthy of mention. It used to be claimed by a resident of Stone Street that he actually witnessed an outstanding feat by a Town player dropping a goal

not as one would assume on a rugby field but from the centre of Stone Street. The ball sailing over the cupola of the Town Hall and clearing the clock tower of the Market Hall, no mean achievement considering the height of such an impressive building.

These early members lacked nothing in enthusiasm and it speaks volumes for their love of the game that rugby football flourished when it could have easily floundered because of the geographical nature of the club. Travelling had always been a problem and before the days of the automobile the team would ride in a horse drawn brake.

One of the club's most loyal and staunch supporters Mr. Bertie Lewis who at 84 years old is still a fine example of physical fitness confounding his advancing age, well remembers travelling to Lampeter by horse brake starting in the early hours and returning late in the evening with everyone in 'high spirits' irrespective of the result.

He was disappointed that the annual Brecon and Llandover college match was postponed because of the foot and mouth epidemic although he is looking forward to the rearranged fixture scheduled to take place later in the season, an event he has enjoyed for the past seventy years. A quiet unassuming character, he recalled that he is one of the few present day active supporters who has travelled by horse brake, cycled on solid, cushion and pneumatic tyres apart from attending matches by motor cycle, car and coach. **SOME RECORD!**

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Without question the club went from strength to strength from its inception during the early 1870's to the turn of the century despite failing in its ambition to obtain full Welsh Union recognition, a feat which was to elude them until as late as 1957. One of the biggest contributory factors in obtaining direct affiliation was, as mentioned above, their geographical position in relationship with other clubs. Today, rugby football is played in most parts of the Principality but at the beginning of the century the majority of clubs were situated on the coastal belt of Glamorgan and because of the then considerable undertaking to Llandovery were reluctant to grant immediate fixtures.

Yet considering their fixture dilemma they themselves enjoyed meeting clubs as far apart as Bridgend, Llanelli and Swansea, including great if violent games against Ammanford, Brecon, Lampeter, Llandeilo, Saron and Llandybie, where to pick up a loose ball in the dying minutes of those memorable derby encounters was to throw an extra burden on an already overtaxed hospital administration!

The late Mr. D. G. Davies one of the only two life members ever appointed along with present chairman Mr. D. T. Davies, a contributor to this magazine, once received a kick on his head in a Llandeilo clash and to no obvious ill effects, inquired on regaining his feet as to whether the offender's boot and foot was still intact.

It speaks volumes for the standard of Llandovery rugby in those early vintage days when E. T. Lewis and T. A. Rees appeared in the first ever Welsh Rugby XV against England at Blackheath in 1880. This is an honour which Llandovery proudly cherishes, especially when it is remembered—one is not allowed to forget—that they were not a recognised Welsh Union Club. This is something unique in the annals of any club and it is interesting to find the strength of Welsh rugby particularly before the turn of the century was not confined to the so-called first class clubs.

Other 'minnow teams' who have achieved this remarkable distinction include Brynmawr (W. G. Evans), Blaina (G. Gore), Penygraig (D. Evans), Mountain Ash (T. Collins), Treorchy (W. Cummings), and Glynneath (D. E. Edwards who was capped as late as 1921).

Llandovery are also proud of the achievements of Harry Watkins and Guy Morgan who between them won 14 caps from the Llanelli and Cambridge University Clubs after learning the rudiments of the game in the Town XV. Four Internationals from a club which did not achieve full Union status until 1957 is certainly something to be justifiably proud of and it is little wonder that football in this rural part of Carmarthenshire has flourished without question over the ensuing decades.



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LLANDOVERY, 1887



Harry Watkins eventually emigrated to British Columbia where he was instrumental with others in establishing the game. Guy Morgan, a nephew of the legendary Teddy Morgan who scored that disputed of all tries against New Zealand in 1905 was the son of a local practitioner Dr. H. Morgan, who himself rendered unstinting service to the cause of the game in Llandovery.

Llandovery has always been connected with another outstanding footballer who won fame over the border via Gloucester and England. He is of course the late D. R. Gent who appeared for Llandovery as a fullback

at a young and tender age. He played several games for Llanelli before moving to Gloucester and only the ascendancy of Welsh wizard Dicky Owen stopped him appearing in a Welsh jersey. Vivian Jenkins a former Llandovery Collegian who appeared for Wales during the thirties succeeded D. R. Gent as the *Sunday Times* Rugby correspondent. A happy coincidence indeed.

During the years between 1900 and 1914 Llandovery continued to preach the gospel of the open game to establish a tradition which has grown over the ensuing years. Consequently with their gay attitude to Rugby and to life generally they have become a popular club both on and off the field.

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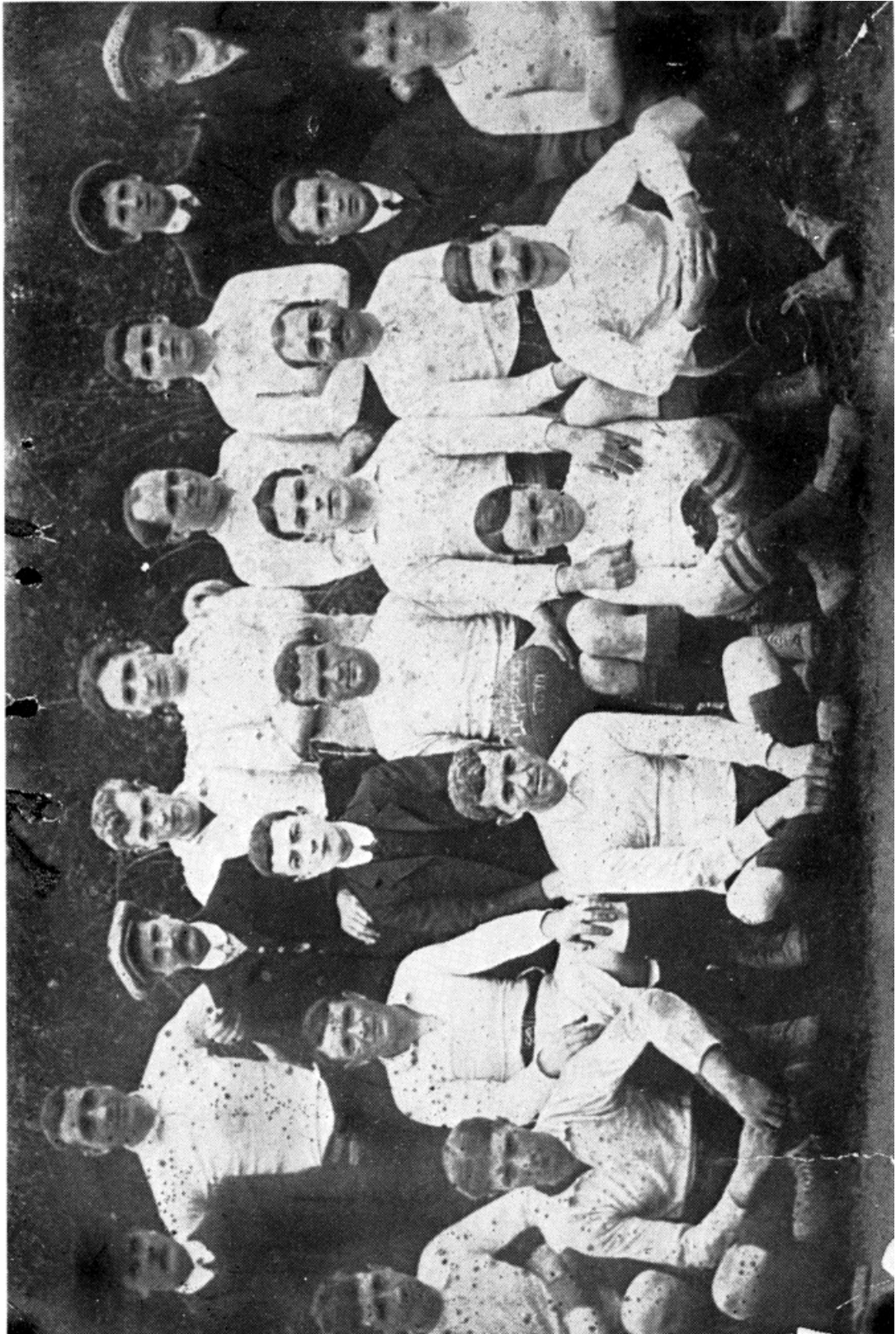
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The 1904 season saw the club supplying six regular players to the Llanelli XV. They were Mac Nicholls Jack Cole, J. C. Jones, D. J. Davies (a cousin of D. R. Gent), Harry Watkins and Edgar Evans who appeared for Wales on the hockey field. After returning from Llanelli Edgar continued playing for Llandover before calling it a day during the 1931 season. A great clubman in all senses of the word.

Others who rendered yeoman service until the outbreak of the first World War included George Jeffreys reputed to have introduced flank forward play into second class football. Will Richards, Tom Lewis, Will Williams, George Davies, Llew Williams and Raymond Jones.

Following the ceasement of hostilities, rugby was reintroduced in the town early in 1920 by a number of former players, Ben and Jack Jackson, Edgar Evans, D. J. Davies and Tom Lewis after returning from the battlefields of France.

The stern twenties saw many hard struggles but players of the calibre of Dan Preston, M. Priscoll, Bertie Jones (now an industrious Vice President), Mozart Thomas, W. Basey, Bill Clement, A. Glyn Jones, Bill Rees, A. P. N. Roberts, Tudor Evans, Ted Thomas, Gomer Davies, and Will Buckland, saw to it that the rugby banner was kept flying. During this era, a successful Thursday XV was launched following an appeal by apprentices in the Hostelry and other trades, in and around the Town.

A leading player in this period was the enthusiastic secretary Mr. A. Glyn Jones who together with another versatile footballer, D. T. Davies, was later to guide Llandover to their ambition of eventually obtaining full W.R.U. recognition.

Llandover has been blessed with other worthy officials in W. T. Ellis, Abdul Rhamatullah Tom Cridland, J. D. Lewis, Dudley James, T. R. Bebb (now a well known W.R.U. referee), Gerald Clarke and Des Clarke the present industrious secretary who was himself a player of repute. The present Club Treasurer is Mr. D. G. Davies, Manager of Lloyds Bank who has returned to the Town following an 'earlier apprenticeship'. A Soccer convert he has done much to place the Club on a sound financial basis.

D. T. Davies, Chairman since 1947, is another great stalwart whom the rugby fraternity of West Wales acknowledges as a popular and energetic ambassador. Under the inspiration of this indefatigable enthusiast (a former Captain during the late twenties), Llandover are well and truly established as a Club possessing a great future. His son Huw, a Veterinary Surgeon, home on vacation from the Bahamas, has played rugby in Canada, South America, Trinidad and Jamaica.

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When leading the Club during the stern twenties, 'D.T.' would take as many as eleven players in his small Bull-nose Morris saloon for an away fixture. On one occasion near Crosshands they came upon a scene of an accident. Sheep which had strayed on to the highway had been involved in a collision with a passing motorist. An irate farmer was naturally concerned about the loss of some of his prized flock but 'D.T.' being a farmer's son, saved the day by 'bleeding' the unfortunate animals, which a grateful owner afterward sold to a needy butcher.

Another amusing travelling anecdote often related in their comfortable Headquarters at the White Hall Hotel, where Mr. and Mrs. Ieuan Rees have been excellent hosts concerns a memorable journey to Brecon shortly after the Second World War. Before departure it soon became apparent that the coach driver had difficulty in stopping when picking up members of the party at various points within the Town. On inquiring as to whether the driver should collect another vehicle with suitable braking power, a somewhat shaken official was told not to worry as the road to Brecon was flat and there would be no trouble in stopping upon arrival at their opponents ground!

After World War Two, Llandovery continued to enjoy good football but again they were finding it increasingly difficult to maintain a fully active fixture list. However, under the Captaincy of Douglas Rees they became established as a considerable force in Carmarthenshire footballing circles with membership hitting an all time peak thanks to the sterling efforts of T. R. Bebb, Granville Evans, Idris Perrier, E. Prosser and Fred Manning.

Douglas Rees who is continuing to serve the Club as a very capable Vice-Chairman, skippered the first XV on three separate occasions during the immediate post war period. On demobilisation from the Armed Forces in 1946 he enjoyed a successful season with Llandybie. They reached the semi-final of the now defunct Colville Seven-a-side Cup Competition at Stradey. Their path to the final was blocked by a 'Kiwis' side containing none other than Charlie Sexton and D. Allen, of whom we all know about. Doug's brother Leslie Rees appeared for Bridgend during the thirties when the Mid-Glamorgan Club performed one of their rare doubles over Cardiff. An opportunist try grabbing scrum-half Leslie would have undoubtedly won a Cap had not the War intervened.

Though the Club was in a healthy state these were quiet days until the early fifties when after decades of playing non-competitive football, a momentous decision was reached by entering into the Llanelli and district league. Understandably it was not a decision easily reached but it was felt that in their own interests such a step was unavoidable. They met with instant success and it was a move they were never to regret.

In 1953, their first competitive season under the inspiring captaincy of Des Clarke they won the President Cup, failing narrowly to collect the double after reaching the Championship play-offs.

For the record, 23 games were won, five drawn, five lost, scoring 321 points with only 91 conceded. The team was an outstanding combination and contained the following members, Des Clarke (captain), John Davies, Les Adams, Ken Evans, John Williams, Jeff Morgan, Colin Doonan, Eric Penlan, Dennis Evans, Len John, Doug Rees, Bernard Jones, Chris Hughes, George Adams, A. Blatchford, Tony Morgan and D. G. Davies (vice-captain).

Four years later Llandovery was successful in obtaining W.R.U. status, though the untiring efforts of Dr. J. Eric Price (President and still holding office), Alderman D. T. Davies (Chairman), Councillor C. R. Rees (Vice Chairman), Gareth Jones (Treasurer), A. Glyn Jones (Secretary) and Gerald Clarke (Assistant Secretary).

A celebration dinner was held at the Castle Hotel to mark this memorable occasion which was attended by the President of the Welsh Rugby Union Mr. Enoch H. Rees and other notable dignitaries.

During the following eleven years thanks to a progressive committee Llandovery has steadily grown in stature as a Union Club. They field two teams, possess a first class playing arena with modern dressing and tea rooms, facilities to ensure maximum comfort and enjoyment for all those who frequent Llandovery in pursuit of the game.

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Capt. D. H. Thomas presents Des Clarke with the President's Cup, 1953-54 season

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Bernard Jones, Club Captain during the 1957 season will never forget his first class baptism when he appeared for Llanelli at Northampton. Opposing him on that occasion was none other than Dicky Jeeps who until recently was an England selector. Now in his twentieth season Bernard, apart from being a committee member is skipping the Second XV where his valuable experience is helping to mould an enthusiastic team.

Others who have developed considerable skill in this rugby stronghold are Glyn Richards, David Jones, Gareth Jones, Jim Sutton (Lancashire County Championship finalist), Jock Brotherston, Mervyn Bevan, John Jenkins, Bryn Davies, John Davies (has skipped Nuneaton), Alwyn Davies and John Jenkins (Welsh final trialist and member of the 1950 Invincible Maesteg XV). All have made their mark in first class football. Adrian Lloyd is the latest recruit to senior football currently appearing for Llanelli.

Frank Maullinger who narrowly missed an Oxford Blue appeared at outside-half—whilst he was a Master at the College during the fifties. He is now Headmaster of Ludlow Grammar School.

No account of the activities of the Town Club would be complete without some reference to the extremely important part played by Llandovery College which apart from its contribution to the field of education, is almost an institution in the annals of Welsh Rugby. The first authentic record of matches with Christ College, Brecon, was that played at Builth in November, 1879, when Llandovery won by five goals, four tries and three minors. SEVENTY-NINE games have been played, Llandovery winning 54, Brecon 15, nine games drawn. An interesting record is that—Old Llandoveryans played in 20 consecutive International matches in the 1930's. Quite an achievement for such a small public school. In the early 90's the College supplied both the Captains of Oxford and Cambridge Universities. The record to date includes seven Oxford Blues and eleven Cambridge Blues, among them such famous names as Vivian Jenkins, A. M. Rees and Cliff Jones.

The Town Club are indeed grateful to the College for the help rendered in the early post war period when the warden placed at their disposal the use of their own ground and equipment. An act which has not been forgotten. No wonder relationships between the two Clubs are indeed on such a high pedestal.

D. T. Davies (I just cannot seem to leave his name out of these notes) has vivid memories of being the only Llandoveryan to officiate at a Llandovery and Brecon match. On this particular occasion the appointed referee failed to make an appearance and after a hasty conference between the Wardens of the respective Colleges, 'D.T.' was asked to step in. Llandovery incidentally emerged narrow victors.

The 1959 season saw the Town Club successful in its application to become members of the highly competitive West Wales Rugby Union and though honours have evaded them, they have managed to hold their own against some of the top teams in the league.

Three former Club products, Dai Jones, Ron Fellows and Eric Williams, accomplished something of a record in 1960 when they skipped Ammanford, Gowerton and Llandybie. Recently another trio of versatile players have become Police Constables in the Staffordshire Constabulary which has a former Welsh Captain and Llandoveryan College pupil, A. M. Rees, as its Chief Constable. The three former Town members, Ron Nitch, Keith Lewis and Caral Jones are also prominent members of the County Police XV which is having a tremendous season in Midland footballing circles.

Helping treasurer Mr. D. G. Davies in consolidating the Club's sound financial front is a virile Entertainments Committee which is also responsible for organising a top class Carnival event which attracts many visitors to the Town during the month of August. Mr. C. Williams is an energetic chairman in this respect with Ernest Whitney, Major Hicks Morgan, Conway Davies, David Davies and D. M. Davies, lending solid support with three active and charming ladies, Mesdames Megan Williams, Cynthia Donnelly and C. Thomas.

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D. J. Davies, Douglas Rees and D. G. Davies have been great Clubmen and in their role as Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Treasurer respectively the fortunes of Llandovery are in safe and strong hands together with those of Secretary Des Clarke.

Llandovery Rugby Football Club Officials

PRESIDENT—Dr. J. Eric Price—has held office since 1947.

CHAIRMAN—D. T. Davies—Retired Headmaster, recently returned from holiday to Bahamas and Canada. Used to play centre threequarter.

VICE-CHAIRMAN—D. J. Rees—Excellent fly-half during playing days. Former Captain who can still run at top pace. Schoolmaster.

TREASURER—D. J. Davies—Bank Manager. Soccer convert, keen moneymaker, excellent snooker player.
FIXTURE SECRETARY—Bernard Jones—Garage Proprietor. Still playing with Second XV. Ex-Captain of First XV. Great scrum-half, played for Taunton and Llanelli.

HON. SECRETARY—Des Clarke—Plumbing and Heating Engineer. Vigorous and intelligent prop forward during playing days. Ex-Captain First XV.

Entertainments and Carnival Officials

CHAIRMAN—W. C. Williams—Company Director. Always looking for ways to make money for Club funds.

SECRETARY—E. Whitney—Company Secretary—Excellent 'back-room worker'. Devotes lot of time to Club activities.

1st XV Players—Llandovery Rugby Football Club

Full Back:

ROY JONES—Coal Salesman—Age 24, height 5ft. 7ins, weight 11 stone. Safe pair of hands and fearless tackler. Made position his own since switching from wing. Vice Captain.

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ALEWYN REES—Builder's Labourer—Age 25, height 5ft. 5ins., weight 10 stone. Fitness fanatic—good utility player behind scrum.

DENNIS HUDSON—Bank employee—Age 21, height 5ft. 4ins., weight 9 stone 3 lbs. Recently promoted from second XV. Excellent tackler.

BILL JAMES—Scrap Metal Merchant—Age 24, height 5ft. 5ins., weight 12 stone. A real trier, improving with every game.

Centres:

ADRIAN LLOYD—Agricultural Student—Age 21, height 5ft. 9ins., weight 13 stone. This season's Aberystwyth University Captain. Has represented Welsh Universities and Carmarthenshire County. Ex Llandovery College product was Captain of School XV (this is a unique record). Very strong and excellent kicker of ball. Farmer's son.

COLIN BASEY—Student—Age 21, height 5ft. 10ins., weight 11 stone 6 lbs. Fearless tackler. Possesses neat break and good pair of hands. The best of Colin has not yet been seen. Final year at Aberystwyth University.

Outside Half:

CLIFFORD BASEY—Zoology Student—Age 21, height 5ft. 10ins., weight 12 stone. Twin brother of Colin. Final year at Barking College of Technology. Has devastating break and more than useful place kicker. Like brother possesses high potential.

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LLANDOVERY, 1967



Scrum Half:

JOHN NICHOLLS—Articled Clerk—Age 22, height 5ft. 8ins., weight 11 stone 3 lbs. Very strong at base of scrum, ideal for West Wales league matches. Excellent passer of ball. Product of Llandovery College where he obtained colours.

GARRY EVANS—Grocery Salesman—Age 25, height 5ft. 7ins., weight 10 stone 9 lbs. Very nippy scrum-half. Early season injury affected his steadiness. Played a lot of Army football in North of England.

Hookers:

KEN RICHARDS—Farmer—Age 27, height 5ft. 8ins., weight 11 stone 3 lbs. Utility player able to play back row or centre. Very fit and keen. Fast striker and very mobile. Grand Clubman. Brother of Glen Richards, London Welsh winger.

ROBERT HOLLAWAY—Clerk—Age 18, height 5ft. 7ins., weight 12 stone 6 lbs. Excellent prospect. Another utility back row or hooker.

Prop Forwards:

T. G. JONES (Captain)—Bank employee—Age 33, height 5ft. 9ins., weight 13 stone. Affectionately called Twm Mount by colleagues. Fourth time has skippered Club. Great and loyal Clubman. Travels 40 miles for Training Session every Wednesday plus Saturday matches. Was treasurer of club while employed in local Bank. Recently become proud father. Many years of football left.

RUSTY JONES—Plasterer—Age 24, height 5ft. 10ins., weight 13 stone 6 lbs. Really hard, durable player always giving best. Enjoys working vigorously in the tight. Good prospect.



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Second Row:

ALAN MORGAN—Farmer—Age 22, height 5ft. 11ins. weight 16 stone. Heaviest man in side. Excellent tight player. Good jumper and loyal Clubman.

KERI BOWYER—Motor Mechanic—Age 23, height 5ft. 11ins., weight 14 stone 7lbs. Very mobile. Excellent prospect, improved immensely since arriving from Llandeilo.

Back Row:

RAY FELLOWES—Bank employee—Age 29, height 5ft. 8ins., weight 12 stone 9 lbs. Former stalwart for Brecon. where he captained First XV Brother of ex-Gowerton captain Ron Fellowes now with Caldicot Newport.

ROGER DAVIES—Bank employee—Age 18, height 6ft. 1ins., weight 12 stone. First season in senior rugby, improving with every game. Excellent line-out forward and very good coverer.

COLIN EVANS—School Teacher—Age 22, height 6ft. 2ins., weight 14 stone. Very clean catcher of ball. Extremely mobile for big forward. Will eventually land a first class club. Excellent prospect.

REG DAVIES—Student—Age 18, height 5ft. 7ins., weight 11 stone 9 lbs. Bright future ahead for this intelligent player. Very fast, good tackler.

HYWEL WHITNEY—Student—Age 19, height 5ft. 11ins., weight 13 stone. More than useful line-out forward. Plays very well in tight. Mobile.

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