



Llandovery RFC article In Welsh Rugby magazine, Oct 1975

WELSH RUGBY—OCTOBER

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FOUNDER MEMBERS OF THE W.R.U.

BY MICHAEL
SAMUEL

Up until now, Llandovery R.F.C. have not been able to determine their official date of birth. They are convinced that rugby in the town was played as far back as the early 1870s, but now certain evidence has come to light which could help the West Wales club fix their date of birth.

When Wales played against England in 1882, one of the members of that Welsh team was C. P. Lewis of Llandovery. It has, over the years, been assumed that the Llandovery mentioned in the book was actually Llandovery College. But Des Clarke, the secretary of the Llandovery club and I have traced the history of Charles Prytherch Lewis and it now looks as though Llandovery Town were one of the founder members of the Welsh Rugby Union.

Charles Prytherch Lewis was born on 20th August, 1853, being one of the "gentry" families of the area. When he played for Wales he was 28 years of age and during this period he was a master at Llandovery College, having obtained an M.A. degree at Jesus College, Oxford.

The significant point regarding this fact is that Charles Prytherch Lewis was too old to be a student at Jesus College, Oxford and that masters were not allowed to play rugby for the school.

Another point — a very important one — is the fact that when the inaugural meeting of the Welsh Rugby Union was held at the Castle Hotel, Neath on 12th March, 1881, the clubs present that day were Swansea, Lampeter, Llandeilo, Cardiff, Newport, Llanelli, Merthyr, LLANDOVERY, Brecon, Pontypool and Bangor.

But to complicate matters, it appears from a paper printed at Llanelli during this time, called the "Llanelli and Country Guardian", that the return game between Llandeilo and Llandovery Town which was played at Llandovery on 19th February, 1885, was "the first occasion for the newly-formed Llandovery Town club to meet a foreign team at home".

Now, the problem which confronts Llandovery is what date to fix for their centenary.

FIRST RUGBY

It has been said that the first rugby ball brought back to Llandovery was brought back by Drovers from Blackheath. These drovers were engaged in driving cattle from all parts of West Wales to London and during the middle of the 19th century, Llandovery was the rendezvous for the collection of cattle from the surrounding districts as well as from Cardiganshire and Pembrokeshire. It is quite

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possible, therefore, that the drovers did bring back rugby footballs to stimulate interest amongst the scattered rural population of Llandovery and District who had been addicted to playing a rough boisterous game of the mediaeval type up to that stage.

It is known that around the late 1860s football was frowned on by a strong Puritan element within the town. It is a known fact as some of the older residents used to recall that the younger men of the town who were drovers who had witnessed rugby at Blackheath had to play late at night on a field known as "Cae Glas Y Bwci" in order not to offend the town inhabitants.

Over the years, wonderful tales have been passed down from father to son about the early exploits of the Llandovery club. One such tale is that a local player once dropped a goal from the centre of Stone Street which sailed over the clock-tower of the local Town Hall — no mean achievement when considering the height of the impressive building.

It is obvious that the early members of the club lacked nothing in enthusiasm and the same enthusiasm and determination is seen in the present-day officials and players.

FIXTURE PROBLEMS

During those early days, Llandovery had

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LLANDOVERY TOWN R.F.C. — SEASON 1949-50

(Back Row) T. R. Bebb, L. Williams, D. G. Davies, G. Adams, J. Morgan, L. Roderick, C. Adams, G. Johnson.
(Middle Row) Mr. W. Pounder, H. Clark, D. James, D. Rees (captain), L. Adams, E. Davies. *(Front Row)* D. Clark, H. James, D. R. T. Davies, B. Jones.

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difficulty in getting fixtures. Their geographical position with regard to other clubs was the main reason for this. During this time, the majority of clubs were situated on the coastal belt of Glamorgan and because of the travelling involved, clubs were obviously reluctant to grant fixtures to them.

But despite their geographical position, Llandovery did manage to play such clubs as Bridgend, Llanelli, Swansea, Ammanford, Brecon, Lampeter, Llandeilo, Saron and Llandybie. **It was fixtures against these local teams that normally caused the most problems, for if a player were to pick up a loose ball in the dying minutes of those remarkable local derbies, the end product was to throw an extra burden on the already overtaxed hospital administration.**



HARRY WATKINS played seven times for Wales.
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Coming back to 1885, the Llandovery team which played against Llanelli Tuesdays during that year was D. I. Jones, C. P. Lewis, W. H. Thomas, Cobner, I. Davies, W. Roderick, D. L. Davies (captain), D. Price, D. Jones, Lloyd, Barratt, T. Landor, Sinnett and Jenkins.

At the beginning of the 1885-86 season, the club held its annual meeting at the King's Head on 17th September, 1885 and officials elected for that season were President—Mr. C. P. Lewis;

Captain—Mr. D. I. M. Jones; Treasurer—Mr. D. R. Jones; Secretary—Mr. Dan Davies; Committee—Sinnett, Barratt, C. Oxenham, Watkins and I. P. Oxenham.

The standard of rugby played during this time by Llandovery must have been remarkably good, for according to the Welsh Rugby Union Handbook, E. I. Lewis and T. A. Rees, both of Llandovery, played for Wales in their first ever rugby international which was played at Blackheath



LLANDOVERY TOWN R.F.C. — SEASON 1952-53

(Back Row) L. Adams, J. Williams, L. Roderick, B. Williams, D. G. Davies, J. Jones, C. Hughes, J. Davies. (Middle Row) Des Clark, J. Morgan, Eric Davies (captain), G. Adams, L. Williams. (Front Row) K. Evans, D. Rees, V. Jones, D. Evans.

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with England winning by 8 goals and 5 tries to nil. The following year C. P. Lewis, who has been mentioned before, was capped against England in 1883, England and Scotland in 1883 and 1884.

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 with the Town XV.

Harry Watkins 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 rendered unstinting service to the cause of the game in Llandovery.

The rugby club of Llandovery has also been connected with another outstanding footballer who won fame over the border via Gloucester and England. He was, of course, the late D. R. Gent who appeared for Llandovery as a full back. 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.

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SIX FOR LLANELLI

It is worth mentioning the fact that when Llandovery Town played rugby, they made every endeavour to play an open game. During the early 1900s and even up to the outbreak of the First World War, Llandovery continued to produce some impressive performances and in 1904 six club members played for Llanelli in Mac Nicholls, Jack Cole, J. C. Jones, D. J. Davies (a cousin of D. R. Gent), Harry Watkins and Edgar Evans who also appeared for Wales on the hockey field. After returning from Llanelli, Edgar continued playing for Llandovery before calling it a day in the 1931 season.

There were other players who also rendered yeoman service until the outbreak of that War, players such as George Jeffreys, Will Richards, Tom Lewis, Will Williams, George Davies, Llew Williams and Raymond Jones.

From 1914 to 1919 no rugby was played in the town. But in 1920 rugby was restarted with such



LLANDOVERY SEVEN-A-SIDE 1966

Back row: R. Griffiths (Coach), C. Evans, D. Walters, R. Jones, E. Prosser (Trainer). Front row: J. Partridge, A. Lloyd (Captain), M. Davies, Jeff Partridge.

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players as Ben and Jack Jackson, Edgar Evans, D. J. Davies and Tom Lewis returning from the battlefields of France.

The 1920s were hard times with the General Strike of 1926 making it difficult for players to find work. But Llandover survived and players such as Dan Preston, M. Priscoll, Bertie Jones, Mozart Thomas, W. Basey, Bill Clements, A. Glyn Jones, Bill Rees, A. P. N. Roberts, Tudor Evans, Ted Thomas, Gomer Davies and Will Buckland saw 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 the town.

Two leading players during this period were the enthusiastic secretary Mr. A. Glyn Jones and D. T. Davies who later played a major role in Llandover's re-admittance as Welsh Rugby Union members.

There were other worthy officials at this time as well with such persons as W. T. Ellis, Aduel Rhamatullah, Tom Cridland, J. D. Lewis, Dudley James, T. R. Bebb, Gerald Clarke and Des Clarke who is the present club secretary. D. T. Davies was another stalwart during this time.

After World War II, Llandover continued to enjoy good football but they found it increasingly

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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.

Doug Rees, who served the club in a number of official capacities, 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 in which he played with Llandybie in the semi-final of the now defunct Colville Seven-a-side competition at Stradey Park. Their

path to the final was blocked by a "Kiwi" side containing none other than Charlie Sexton and D. Allen, two Kiwis that we know all about. Doug's brother Leslie appeared for Bridgend during the thirties when the Mid-Glamorgan club performed one of the rare doubles over Cardiff. An opportunist try-grabbing scrum half, Leslie would have been in contention for a Welsh cap had not the War intervened.

VITAL DECISION

Although the club was in a healthy state during the early fifties, a momentous decision was taken by the Llandovery committee for they decided to enter the Llanelli and District Rugby Union League. This was the first time for the club to be



LLANDOVERY TOWN R.F.C. — SEASON 1955-56

(Back Row) C. Rees, A. Williams, J. Blanchford, G. Adams, R. Fellowes, G. Davies, W. Griffiths, N. Morgan, J. Morgan, D. Clark. (Front Row) K. Mullinger, B. Thomas, B. Jones, W. Williams, I. Davies, L. Adams, C. Hughes.

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involved in competitive rugby. Understandably, after years of non-competitive rugby, it was not a decision which was easily reached but it was felt that in their own interests that such a step was unavoidable. They met with instant success and it proved to be a move that they were never to regret.

It was in 1953 in their first season of competitive rugby and under the captaincy of Des Clarke, that Llandover first won a major honour. They won the Llanelli and District's President's Cup, failing narrowly to collect the double after reaching the championship play-offs.

During that season, Llandover won 23 games, drew 5 and lost 5, scoring a total of 321 points and conceding only 91. The team was an outstanding combination and contained such players as 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, Alan Blatchford, Tony Morgan and D. G. Davies.

W.R.U. STATUS

It was four years later in 1957 that Llandover were successful in re-obtaining Welsh Rugby Union status through untiring efforts of Dr. J. Eric Price, Alderman D. T. Davies, Councillor C. R. Rees, Gareth Jones, A. Glyn Jones and Gerald Clarke.

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

Llandover have, over the years, found other worthy players who have represented the town on the first class fields of rugby clubs in Wales. One such player, Bernard Jones, who was the Llandover rugby captain in 1957, will probably 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 played so well for England in the many internationals which he played for them.

Of course, there have been others who have had similar experiences. A number of players have developed considerable skill from playing with Llandover, players such as Glyn Richards, David Jones, Gareth Jones, Jim Sutton (who appeared with Lancashire County in the final of the Counties championship), Jock Brotherston, Mervyn Bevan, John Jenkins, Bryn Davies, John Davies (who also skippered Nuneaton), Alwyn Davies and John Davies (who was a Welsh final trialist and a member of the 1950 Invincible Maesteg XV). Adrian Lloyd was another talented player who appeared for Llanelli.



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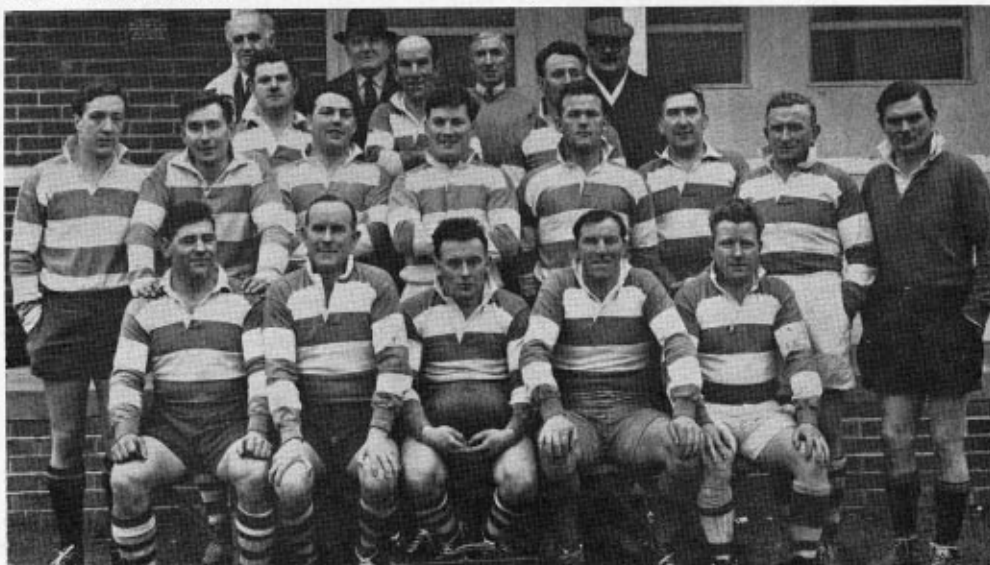
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W.W.R.U. STATUS

In 1959, Llandoverly were successful in obtaining membership of the West Wales Rugby Union. Unfortunately, honours have evaded them until now, but despite this disappointing performance, Llandoverly are capable of winning some of the Union's major honours.

The following year, three former club products, David Jones, Ron Fellows and Eric Williams, accomplished something of a record for they skippered Ammanford, Gowerton and Llandybie respectively.

As mentioned previously, since Llandoverly joined the West Wales Rugby Union, success has



LLANDOVERLY TOWN R.F.C. — SEASON 1963-64

(Back Row) Eric Davies, late D. T. Davies, Cyril Rees, Mr. Perrier. (Third Row) A. Williams, G. Adams, D. Preece.
(Second Row) J. Partridge, N. Morgan, R. Fellowes, Jeff Jones, K. Lewis, J. Williams, C. Hughes, Carwyn James.
(Front Row) J. Davies, D. Rees, B. Jones, L. Adams, P. Jackson.

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LLANDOVERY TOWN 2nd XV — SEASON 1975-76

(Back Row) N. Morgan, D. Jones, Steve Lewis, Huw Jones, Adrian Thomas, Gareth Morgan, Richard Lilley, Huw Davies, Derek Jones, E. Morgan, M. Page.
(Front Row) I. Jackson, Dai Williams, Martin Phillips, Wyn Williams, Towy Morgan, Arthur Davies (capt.), Roy Jones, Viv Jones, Dai Thomas, H. Page.



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eluded them. In fact, it was in 1968-69 that they enjoyed one of their most successful ever seasons in the competition, for that season out of 18 championship games played they won 11 games, drew 1 and lost 6, scoring 126 points and conceding 109. They ended up in ninth place in the final championship table. This was a remarkable performance for Llandovery, for the season before they had ended up in 28th place having played 17 championship games, won only 4 of them, drew none and lost the other 13, scoring just 51 points.

In the 11 championship wins which they obtained in 1968-69, they started off badly for they lost their two opening games against Penclawdd by 18 points to nil and Trebanos by 22 points to 3, but victories were recorded against Llandybie, Abercrave, Burry Port, Crynant and Gowerton with doubles being recorded against Abercrave, Llandybie, Burry Port and Crynant.

But the following season proved to be an anticlimax, for Llandovery only won 5 out of the 18 championship games which they played. They managed to score just 72 points that season and ended in 26th place.

The following season wasn't much better, for they only won four games against Carmarthen, Cefneithin, Cwmavon and Glais, out of the 15 which they played. That season they ended up in 24th place.

Season 1971-72 was something of a disaster as well, for they only managed three wins from 18 games played and they were against Ammanford, Loughor and Bynea. Their final league position was 38th, only three places from the bottom which was occupied that season by Pontardawe who ended with 18 successive defeats and no points.

IMPROVEMENT

Season 1972-73 showed an improvement, for they ended in 29th place, but in 1973-74 they produced another disappointing season, for they ended in 36th place.

Last season was the season that the West Wales Rugby Union introduced promotion and relegation for the first time. Llandovery started in Section C together with Llandybie, Cwmllynfell, New Dock Stars, Penclawdd, Seven Sisters, Cefneithin, Ammanford, Pontardawe and Swansea Uplands. The end product was that Llandovery ended up in eighth place in the table and with Swansea Uplands, Pontardawe and Ammanford, lost Section C status and this season they play in Section D with such teams as Glais, Ammanford, Llanguennech, Pontardawe, Pontyberem, Swansea Uplands, Cwmavon, Trebanos and Cwmgors.

During the last few seasons, Llandovery have also been involved in the Welsh Cup competition but, alas, no success has materialised in this competition either. In 1972-73 they lost in the

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first preliminary round to Pontyberem when they were defeated by 12 points to 10 at Pontyberem. They did slightly better in 1973-74, for they defeated Dunvant in the first preliminary round by 13 points to 9 before losing by a try to nil at Llangennech in the second preliminary round. But last season they failed even to reach the second round, for they were defeated 16 points to 6 at home by Amman United.

Their opponents in the Welsh Cup competition this season will be the winners of the Gorseinon versus Llangennech game.

SECOND TEAM

Llandovery's success in the Llanelli and District has been very limited, for since 1953 nothing has been won. Season 1971-72 was a particularly poor one for them, for of the 12 championship games played by the second team that season, eleven games resulted in defeat and one was drawn at home against Trimsaran.

The following season was even worse, for all ten championship games played resulted in defeat. Even their Cup dreams came to an end when they faced Trimsaran at home, for they were defeated by 49 points to 4.

But 1973-74 was a better season for Llandovery, for they managed to win one championship game out of the 12 which they played. Their victory was recorded over Pontyberem who subsequently withdrew from the Llanelli and District League.

This must have been the turning point as far as Llandovery were concerned, for last season they recorded six victories from the 11 games which they played and they scored 97 points and conceded 87. This season they are in Group B with games against Carmarthen, Amman Quins, Pont-yates, Penybanc, Trimsaran and Tycroes to play.

Llandovery's third team is the Under-15s which is run by Bernard Jones. Just three of the up-and-coming stars are Geraint Williams, Haydn Adams and Alan Morgan. Two former products of the Under-15 side, Tony Williams and Huw Davies, have joined Ammanford Youth and Llandovery are hoping that they will be back with them this season. Huw has just joined the Dyfed Police Force.

Mention must be made of Llandovery's second team performance against Tumble last season, for they became the first team to defeat Tumble for three seasons on their own ground and the referee for that game was Alan John, brother of Barry John. Alan is the Tumble captain this season.

A number of players have given outstanding service to Llandovery's second team, players such as Arthur Davies, Towyn Morgan, Tom Jones (who is now 41 years old), Roy Jones, Alun Morgan and Gwyn Thomas.



Llandovery RFC article In Welsh Rugby magazine, Oct 1975

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Tom Jones has something of a unique record in rugby, for he travels from his home in Port Talbot to play for Llandovery every week and when they play at home, it means a return trip of some 80 miles.

There are some promising players in the seconds as well, players such as David Adams, Neville Hughes, Alan Morgan and Alan Walters. Gareth Williams is another one but he did make a few first team appearances last season.

In the first team Huw Lewis is this season's captain. His vice-captain is Alan Walters. David Williams emerged as Llandovery's leading points scorer last season with 126 points, whilst the form of Jeff Augustus who led Llandovery last season, Rusty Jones, Robert Holloway, Noel Page, Huw Ingram, Steve Lewis, Huw Lewis, Malcolm

"Mighty" Page and Dilwyn Augustus will decide Llandovery's future this season.

Viv Jones, who only played seven games last season, is another outstanding prospect and the club are hoping that centre Arnot Hughes will supply some sparkle in mid-field.

SOME SUCCESS

But success hasn't completely passed Llandovery by, for they have won one trophy in the last few years and that was in 1970 when they became recipients of the local Cromwell Evans Cup which is played for between clubs in the Amman Valley. That year they beat Brynamman by 9 points to 6 to win their first ever major trophy.

CLUBHOUSE

One aspect of the Llandovery Rugby Club which has not been mentioned up until now is



LLANDOVERY TOWN R.F.C. — SEASON 1966-67

(Back Row) A. Williams, A. Morgan, R. Jones, J. Rees, K. Bowyer, G. Jones. (Middle Row) G. Jones, G. Evans, G. Jones (captain), A. Walters, R. Jones. (Front Row) I. Morton, G. Davies, R. Jones, K. Richards.

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about Llandover's clubhouse. It wasn't until 1974 that, after years of searching, Llandover were in a position to obtain their very own clubhouse.

For 20-odd years they had been looking for a place to build; they wanted to build on their field but it wasn't possible. In 1974 a public house by the name of the Great North Western Hotel became available and Llandover leased it from a local brewery. Felinfoel Brewery kindly leased the hotel to the Llandover club and this is where Llandover's new clubhouse is.

Like most other clubs, Llandover have been running a tote system and the man behind this venture is Neville Morgan who has masterminded

the whole operation for many years. This has brought in valuable finance to the Llandover club, for one of their main expenses is on travelling to play in West Wales.

At the moment there is some fund-raising in progress, for Llandover are contemplating on making a tour to Germany next season. Various activities are being used to accumulate money for this tour such as dances, bed-pushing and raffles.

But Llandover are a club with big ideas. Their main concern is to have the best playing record in West Wales. They hope to expand the social activities of the club and, more important, they would like to own their own ground.

They are developing a Youth XV as well as their other three teams and to do this, and do so successfully, a club must have capable officials at the helm and Llandover have them in such persons as Des Clarke, a secretary who has devoted his life to Llandover R.F.C. Then there is President Dr. T. J. Williams, Chairman D. J. Rees, Vice-chairman D. G. Davies, Treasurer Joe Richards, Assistant Treasurer Ormond Davies and Assistant Secretary Ivor Jackson. Fixture Secretary is Idris Morton who with his wife are "mine hosts" at their new clubhouse. Coach is Haydn Hudson and he has worked hard in improving Llandover's playing record.

The ladies must not be left out of a feature like this. Mrs. M. Davies and Mrs. M. Williams are joint secretaries of the ladies committee under the chairmanship of Mr. B. Rees. They prepare food after every home game.

And as I end this short story on Llandover, mention should be made of Dr. Huw Davies, the son of D. T. Davies who has donated a Cup "to the person who has contributed the most to rugby in Llandover". The first winner was Des Clarke who has also had the distinction of being made a life member of the club.

Now, Llandover's biggest problem is to decide what year to take as their centenary season. I trust I have helped them a little in finding their date of birth.

Best Wishes to LLANDOVER RUGBY CLUB

E. J. ADAMS

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