



FIRSTS, LASTS  
& ONLYS

PRESENTS THE MOST AMAZING

RUGBY

FACTS FROM PAST TO PRESENT

PAUL DONNELLEY



FIRSTS, LASTS  
& ONLYS

**Paul Donnelley**

PRESENTS THE MOST AMAZING

RUGBY

FACTS FROM THE LAST 200 YEARS



# THE FIRSTS

First person to take the ball in his arms and run with it	<b>15</b>
First laws of the games	<b>17</b>
First regular manufacturers of rugby balls	<b>18</b>
First mention of rugby in Wales	<b>18</b>
First mention of rugby in Scotland	<b>19</b>
First mention of rugby in a novel	<b>19</b>
First open rugby club	<b>20</b>
First sport to derive directly from rugby	<b>21</b>
First national organisation for rugby	<b>24</b>
First international rugby match	<b>25</b>
First Scotsman to play for England	<b>25</b>
First Varsity rugby match	<b>27</b>
First recorded game of rugby on American soil	<b>30</b>
First game of American football	<b>30</b>
First brothers to play for England in same match	<b>31</b>
First international player to die	<b>31</b>
First Test captain to kill himself	<b>32</b>
First match at Lansdowne Road	<b>33</b>
First full back	<b>34</b>
First fly half	<b>34</b>
First standard three-quarter line	<b>34</b>
First rugby match under floodlights	<b>34</b>
First Calcutta Cup match	<b>36</b>
First try scored by Ireland	<b>37</b>
First meeting of the Irish Rugby Football Union	<b>37</b>
First England Test appearance by a player still at school	<b>38</b>
First England v Wales international	<b>38</b>
First outing for the Wales scarlet jersey	<b>38</b>
First Wales international victory	<b>39</b>
First Wales try scorer	<b>39</b>
First double international player at rugby and cricket	<b>39</b>
First man to captain England at rugby and cricket	<b>39</b>
First rugby sevens tournament	<b>40</b>
First international team to ask the referee to penalise its own error	<b>41</b>
First international rugby organisation	<b>41</b>
First recorded mention of Triple Crown	<b>42</b>
First international match at Cardiff Arms Park	<b>42</b>
First abandoned rugby Test	<b>43</b>
First referee's whistle	<b>44</b>
First Wales "home" match not played in Wales	<b>46</b>
First "fantasy rugby team"	<b>46</b>
First rugby tour of Australia and New Zealand	<b>46</b>
First winners of the English County Championship	<b>48</b>
First tour match by an overseas team in Britain	<b>49</b>

First performance of haka	<b>49</b>
First international by an overseas team in Britain	<b>49</b>
First England Test match against non-national opponents	<b>49</b>
First Wales international to die	<b>50</b>
First Welsh player bought by an English club	<b>50</b>
First time Wales beat England	<b>50</b>
First Test match held at Crown Flatt	<b>50</b>
First captain of the Barbarians	<b>51</b>
First time Scotland won the Triple Crown	<b>53</b>
First international played in southern hemisphere	<b>53</b>
First official try scored by a British Isles tourist	<b>53</b>
First New Zealand player sent off	<b>55</b>
First Triple Crown won by Ireland	<b>56</b>
First rugby league clubs	<b>57</b>
First rugby league champions	<b>58</b>
First winners of rugby league Challenge Cup	<b>59</b>
First player to score in a Challenge Cup Final	<b>59</b>
First try-scorer in a Challenge Cup Final	<b>59</b>
First brothers to score tries for England in same match	<b>60</b>
First Welsh rugby union player to win a British Isles (Lions) cap	<b>61</b>
First rugby union international to win the Victoria Cross	<b>63</b>
First England international to become an MP	<b>64</b>
First rugby league club to win the double	<b>64</b>
First player to score a Challenge Cup Final hat-trick	<b>64</b>
First rugby union Test series won by South Africa	<b>65</b>
First father and son to play for England	<b>66</b>
First international rugby league match	<b>67</b>
First British touring player sent off	<b>67</b>
First all-ticket Test match	<b>68</b>
First winners of rugby league county cups	<b>69</b>
First rugby union All Blacks tour of Britain	<b>69</b>
First team to beat the All Blacks on British soil	<b>69</b>
First international rugby union sides to adopt numbered shirts	<b>69</b>
First black man to play rugby union for England	<b>72</b>
First rugby league Test match	<b>77</b>
First overseas rugby league tour to Britain	<b>77</b>
First Australian rugby league club	<b>78</b>
First winners of the Sydney Premiership	<b>78</b>
First club to retain the Sydney Premiership title	<b>78</b>
First New Zealand-Australia rugby league Test match	<b>80</b>
First game of rugby league in Australia	<b>80</b>
First game of rugby league in New Zealand	<b>80</b>
First Ashes Test	<b>81</b>
First Australian rugby league tour of Britain	<b>81</b>
First English tour of Australasia	<b>81</b>
First rugby union match at Twickenham	<b>82</b>
First rugby union Five Nations match	<b>83</b>
First home nation beaten by France in rugby union Five Nations match	<b>85</b>

First father and son to represent Ireland	<b>85</b>
First Wales rugby union international killed in the First World War	<b>88</b>
First regular memorial match established for a war hero	<b>92</b>
First Northampton player to captain England	<b>92</b>
First rugby league four-figure transfer fee	<b>94</b>
First use of term British Lions (rugby league)	<b>94</b>
First time three pairs of brothers played in a rugby union international	<b>96</b>
First rugby union player sent off in an international	<b>100</b>
First rugby union match at Murrayfield	<b>100</b>
First team to beat England at Twickenham	<b>101</b>
First Middlesex Sevens competition	<b>101</b>
First rugby league Challenge Cup Final at Wembley	<b>103</b>
First rugby league player to score at Wembley	<b>103</b>
First Wembley rugby league try-scorer	<b>103</b>
First rugby league club to win the Sydney Premiership five times in succession	<b>104</b>
First time Wales beat England at Twickenham	<b>107</b>
First rugby league player to score in every match of the season	<b>108</b>
First London rugby league club	<b>109</b>
First rugby union player to score from full back in the International Championship	<b>110</b>
First rugby league player to score more than 400 points in a season	<b>111</b>
First British club side to beat the All Blacks	<b>112</b>
First televised rugby match (rugby union)	<b>113</b>
First rugby union international to die in the Second World War	<b>114</b>
First Russian to play for England	<b>114</b>
First prince to play for England	<b>114</b>
First England victory over the All Blacks	<b>114</b>
First Wales international killed in Second World War	<b>116</b>
First rugby union v rugby league match	<b>118</b>
First winner of rugby league's Lance Todd Trophy	<b>118</b>
First reigning monarch to attend a rugby league match	<b>119</b>
First player to win the Lance Todd Trophy whilst on the losing team	<b>119</b>
First occasion Wales wore white shorts in a rugby union international	<b>120</b>
First club to appear in three consecutive rugby league Challenge Cup finals	<b>122</b>
First televised rugby league match	<b>123</b>
First televised rugby league Challenge Cup Final	<b>123</b>
First black professional coach in any British sport (rugby league)	<b>125</b>
First black player to win a Great Britain rugby league cap	<b>125</b>
First drawn rugby league Challenge Cup Final	<b>127</b>
First player to win the Lance Todd Trophy twice	<b>127</b>
First black rugby league British Lion	<b>129</b>
First rugby league player to score more than 35 tries on a Lions tour	<b>129</b>
First British player to score four tries in one game against New Zealand	<b>129</b>
First rugby world cup (rugby league)	<b>130</b>
First British journalists to report a rugby union Lions tour	<b>132</b>
First player to play for British Lions and against them	<b>135</b>
First rugby union International Championship to end the season after it started	<b>136</b>

First rugby league club to install under soil heating	<b>137</b>
First pair of rugby league players to share the Lance Todd Trophy	<b>138</b>
First winners of rugby league BBC2 Floodlit Trophy	<b>139</b>
First rugby league fixtures on Sunday	<b>142</b>
First rugby union replacement	<b>143</b>
First international rugby union replacement	<b>144</b>
First rugby union replacement for Ireland	<b>144</b>
First rugby union replacement for England	<b>144</b>
First Roman Catholic priest to play international rugby league	<b>145</b>
First England rugby union coach	<b>145</b>
First sponsored rugby league World Cup	<b>146</b>
First Welsh rugby union player to captain British Lions	<b>147</b>
First winners of rugby league Player's No 6 Trophy	<b>148</b>
First British rugby union national knockout competition	<b>148</b>
First black player to captain a British national team in any sport (rugby league)	<b>149</b>
First rugby league player to feature on <i>This is Your Life</i>	<b>149</b>
First rugby league player to receive a Challenge Cup winner's medal and a Sydney Grand Final winner's medal	<b>151</b>
First streaker at a rugby football match (rugby union)	<b>153</b>
First rugby league player to captain three different clubs to Challenge Cup victory at Wembley	<b>154</b>
First England Test player sent off	<b>156</b>
First streaker at a rugby league Challenge Cup Final	<b>157</b>
First Irish player sent off in a Test	<b>158</b>
First Welsh player sent off in a Test	<b>158</b>
First Grand Slam by the All Blacks	<b>159</b>
First team to be Second Division champions twice	<b>162</b>
First rugby league State of Origin winner	<b>163</b>
First black rugby union Springbok	<b>165</b>
First Test appearance by Rob Andrew	<b>170</b>
First rugby league Challenge Cup Final to raise £1million receipts	<b>173</b>
First red card shown at rugby union World Cup Final	<b>173</b>
First rugby union World Cup Final	<b>174</b>
First national sporting hall of fame in the UK (rugby league)	<b>175</b>
First occasion <i>Swing Low Sweet Chariot</i> was sung at an England game	<b>176</b>
First England Test match on a Sunday	<b>176</b>
First player capped for Ireland after representing another country	<b>177</b>
First occasion <i>Flower Of Scotland</i> was played as Scotland's rugby anthem	<b>177</b>
First England rugby union player to win 50 caps	<b>178</b>
First England "blood bin" replacement	<b>180</b>
First rugby league Super League	<b>180</b>
First major sporting event to take place in Africa	<b>181</b>
First time rugby union World Cup held in one country	<b>181</b>
First foreign rugby union coach appointed by Ireland	<b>181</b>
First rugby union v rugby league match under rugby league rules	<b>183</b>
First player to score a rugby league try for a rugby union team	<b>183</b>
First rugby league player to score a hat-trick at Wembley	<b>184</b>

First rugby league club to play at Twickenham	<b>184</b>
First rugby league club to win the rugby union Middlesex Sevens	<b>184</b>
First Super League champions	<b>185</b>
First season of summer rugby league	<b>185</b>
First England tactical replacement	<b>185</b>
First time England had a sponsor's name on shirt	<b>185</b>
First yellow card (sin bin) shown at international rugby union	<b>186</b>
First Super League Grand Final winners	<b>187</b>
First time England did not wear white shirts	<b>188</b>
First Irish player sent to the sin bin	<b>191</b>
First rugby union player to score 1,000 international points	<b>192</b>
First rugby union club to retain the Heineken Cup	<b>192</b>
First yellow card shown at rugby union World Cup Final	<b>194</b>
First club to win the rugby league Challenge Cup and Super League Grand Final in the same season	<b>194</b>
First rugby league Challenge Cup Final played in Wales	<b>194</b>
First man to play in the rugby union and cricket World Cup finals tournaments in the same year	<b>195</b>
First Triple Crown winners	<b>197</b>
First rugby league club sponsored by a film	<b>198</b>
First rugby league player to compete with an opponent's tooth in his head	<b>201</b>
First rugby league Challenge Cup Final at the new Wembley stadium	<b>202</b>
First Challenge Cup Final to feature a foreign team	<b>202</b>
First rugby league player to score a try at the new Wembley Stadium	<b>202</b>
First rugby team to put their Twitter names on their shirts	<b>204</b>
First rugby sevens match at North Pole	<b>206</b>

## THE LASTS

Last 20-a-side rugby matches	<b>29</b>
Last player to captain England at both cricket and rugby	<b>47</b>
Last time goals counted for more than tries	<b>54</b>
Last rugby league line-out	<b>60</b>
Last international rugby union side to adopt numbered shirts	<b>70</b>
Last 15-a-side rugby league match	<b>73</b>
Last rugby league match to feature rucks and mauls	<b>73</b>
Last rugby league club to lose every fixture in a season	<b>74</b>
Last rugby union international to win the Victoria Cross	<b>91</b>
Last time rugby union was played at the Olympic Games	<b>98</b>
Last rugby league club to win All Four Cups	<b>102</b>
Last of rugby league's "loose" loose forward	<b>105</b>
Last time Richard Burton played rugby union	<b>125</b>
Last time an entire side left the field during a rugby union international	<b>133</b>
Last time five brothers played on the same first-class rugby union team	<b>136</b>
Last reigning British monarch to attend a rugby league Challenge Cup Final	<b>141</b>
Last time Britain won the rugby league Ashes	<b>146</b>

Last England Test match against non-national opponents	<b>147</b>
Last British rugby league captain to lift the World Cup	<b>149</b>
Last Test match of Barry John	<b>150</b>
Last of rugby league four-tackle rule in Britain	<b>151</b>
Last Test match of Gareth Edwards	<b>159</b>
Last “great folk memory”	<b>159</b>
Last winners of rugby league BBC2 Floodlit Trophy	<b>163</b>
Last commentary by Eddie Waring	<b>164</b>
Last rugby league Challenge Cup Final replay	<b>166</b>
Last Subbuteo table rugby team	<b>167</b>
Last time Hull and Hull Kingston Rovers met in the Yorkshire Cup Final	<b>169</b>
Last England debutant captain	<b>170</b>
Last Challenge Cup Final attended by a royal	<b>170</b>
Last Test appearance by Tony Ward	<b>172</b>
Last rugby league Sydney Grand Final at the Sydney Cricket Ground	<b>175</b>
Last miner to play for Wales (rugby union)	<b>179</b>
Last abandoned rugby Test (rugby union)	<b>179</b>
Last winners of rugby league county cups	<b>179</b>
Last rugby union World Cup in amateur era	<b>181</b>
Last Five Nations match	<b>188</b>
Last rugby league Challenge Cup Final at the Empire Stadium, Wembley	<b>189</b>
Last rugby union Test match at Athletic Park	<b>190</b>
Last rugby match to attract more than 100,000 spectators (rugby union)	<b>191</b>
Last match at Lansdowne Road	<b>201</b>
Last pair of players to share the Lance Todd Trophy	<b>202</b>
Last Test played by Pacific Islanders	<b>203</b>

## THE ONLYS

Only football club to be a founder member of both the Football Association and the Rugby Football Union	<b>23</b>
Only rugby international initiated by a loss at soccer	<b>25</b>
Only player to captain England in each of his Test matches	<b>27</b>
Only player to represent Scotland at rugby and football	<b>28</b>
Only international cancelled due to a dropped ball	<b>41</b>
Only one-armed rugby player to score thirteen conversions out of thirteen	<b>44</b>
Only player to wear a monocle during matches	<b>45</b>
Only man to play for two nations in the Home Nations Championships	<b>52</b>
Only time a side conceded no points in the Home Nations Championships	<b>54</b>
Only England player to score three tries and finish on losing side	<b>56</b>
Only Challenge Cup Final in which a drop-goal scored 4 points	<b>59</b>
Only man to captain and coach British Lions on same tour	<b>61</b>
Only Scottish international killed in the Boer war	<b>63</b>
Only rugby football Test match in which both captains and the referee were Scottish internationals	<b>65</b>

Only 12-a-side rugby league Test match	<b>67</b>
Only international team Ireland have played and never beaten	<b>68</b>
Only policeman to force a change in the laws	<b>71</b>
Only man who played Test rugby after refereeing a Test match	<b>72</b>
Only major sport with 13 players a side	<b>73</b>
Only first class rugby league club to lose every fixture in the club's history	<b>74</b>
Only Scotsman to win three Triple Crowns	<b>75</b>
Only Welshman to play in winning Welsh rugby union and league teams against New Zealand	<b>76</b>
Only Welsh rugby union international killed by a poisoned arrow	<b>79</b>
Only "Family Championship of the UK"	<b>83</b>
Only international to die before his 20th birthday	<b>86</b>
Only Test match played in four quarters	<b>86</b>
Only 10-man team to win the rugby league Ashes	<b>87</b>
Only rugby international killed by a rhinoceros	<b>88</b>
Only first-class rugby league player to win the Victoria Cross	<b>89</b>
Only England rugby union international to win the Victoria Cross	<b>91</b>
Only international rugby league player to go out to play bare-chested	<b>91</b>
Only rugby union international to win an Olympic Gold medal	<b>97</b>
Only nation to retain an Olympic rugby union title	<b>98</b>
Only rugby union player to win gold medals for two different countries	<b>98</b>
Only national newspaper to fail to report on a Test match because its correspondent was at a hopsotch match	<b>102</b>
Only England hooker to hitch a ride to an international in a coal lorry	<b>105</b>
Only joint try awarded in international rugby union history	<b>106</b>
Only person to play rugby union for Wales and cricket for England	<b>107</b>
Only rugby league club to have eight incarnations	<b>109</b>
Only time the All Blacks were beaten by schoolboys	<b>112</b>
Only man to play cricket and rugby Tests for New Zealand	<b>113</b>
Only man to play and officiate cricket and rugby Tests	<b>113</b>
Only rugby league goal kicked from a distance of more than 75 yards	<b>116</b>
Only British forward to appear in five Ashes-winning squads	<b>116</b>
Only Rugby League Championship declared void	<b>117</b>
Only Roman Catholic priest to have played international rugby	<b>121</b>
Only time three consecutive Challenge Cup finals have been attended by royalty	<b>122</b>
Only country to field two rugby union teams in full internationals on the same day	<b>122</b>
Only award-winning playwright and novelist to have signed as a semi-professional rugby league player to pay his art school fees	<b>124</b>
Only film about rugby league nominated for an Oscar	<b>124</b>
Only British rugby football match to attract more than 100,000 spectators	<b>127</b>
Only winners of rugby league ITV Floodlit Competition	<b>132</b>
Only time Wales played a rugby union Test match with trial jerseys	<b>133</b>
Only rugby league player to play a Test match with a broken arm	<b>134</b>
Only occasion National Anthem not played at a Twickenham Test	<b>137</b>
Only winners of rugby league Bottom Fourteen Competition	<b>138</b>
Only cup final appearance by Doncaster	<b>138</b>

Only club to win BBC2 Floodlit Trophy three times in succession	<b>139</b>
Only rugby league club to win eleven Sydney Premierships in a row	<b>140</b>
Only British Prime Minister to lose an eye playing rugby	<b>141</b>
Only referee to officiate at two royal Challenge Cup finals	<b>141</b>
Only rugby union player to captain Wales before reaching age of 21	<b>143</b>
Only rugby league player to have a dual carriageway and a play named after him	<b>149</b>
Only five-way tie in the rugby union Five Nations tournament	<b>153</b>
Only England rugby tour cancelled because of a kidnap threat	<b>153</b>
Only winners of rugby league Captain Morgan Trophy	<b>156</b>
Only winners of rugby league Club Championship	<b>156</b>
Only rugby union international killed by lightning during a first class match	<b>157</b>
Only Blue Peter presenter to share a bath with future Great Britain rugby league coach Malcolm Reilly	<b>158</b>
Only rugby union team to beat the All Blacks on the "Grand Slam" tour	<b>159</b>
Only single match to have both a play and a book written about it	<b>160</b>
Only rugby league player to make six representative trips down under	<b>161</b>
Only first class British rugby league team to win all its games in a season	<b>162</b>
Only player to represent three countries	<b>167</b>
Only rugby league club named after a lager	<b>168</b>
Only rugby league Challenge Cup Final result predicted in a West End play	<b>170</b>
Only club to win the rugby league Challenge Cup eight times in succession	<b>182</b>
Only club to win the Rugby League Championship seven times in succession	<b>182</b>
Only club to do the double six times in succession	<b>182</b>
Only international rugby union try scored in less than 10 seconds	<b>187</b>
Only time England did not wear white shorts	<b>188</b>
Only brothers to play against each other in a rugby union World Cup match	<b>189</b>
Only Six Nations side to beat Scotland on first meeting	<b>190</b>
Only son of an England Test cricketer and first-class footballer to play first-class cricket, rugby union, rugby league	<b>193</b>
Only referee to officiate at two rugby union World Cup finals	<b>195</b>
Only rugby player to win BBC Sports Personality of the Year Award	<b>196</b>
Only rugby union fan to cut off his testicles to celebrate a win	<b>196</b>
Only rugby league club part owned by Russell Crowe	<b>198</b>
Only rugby league team relegated from Super League without finishing bottom	<b>198</b>
Only player to win the rugby league Lance Todd Trophy three times	<b>199</b>
Only international rugby captain convicted of murder (rugby union)	<b>199</b>
Only Test won by Pacific Islanders	<b>203</b>
Only occasion clubs from one town have held the FA Cup and rugby league Challenge Cup simultaneously	<b>205</b>
Only player to be sent off in the Varsity match	<b>206</b>

NOTE: Throughout I have referred to firsts, lasts and onllys of “rugby” or “rugby football” where they apply to either code, and of rugby union or rugby league where they apply to rugby union or rugby league only. Note also that in rugby league Test matches British teams were billed as England until 1948 when they were billed as Great Britain.

## FIRST

# PERSON TO TAKE THE BALL IN HIS ARMS AND RUN WITH IT

WILLIAM WEBB ELLIS AT SCHOOL CLOSE, RUGBY SCHOOL,  
WARWICKSHIRE CV22 5EH ENGLAND. (APOCRYPHAL) 1823.

William Webb Ellis’s act of rule-breaking, which supposedly gave birth to the game of rugby football as we know it, has been commemorated with a plaque at Rugby School, a £40,000 bronze statue in Rugby town, and the naming of the Rugby Union World Cup after him. Yet there is no evidence that Ellis ever committed the act for which he is so famous. The source of the story is two letters from Matthew Bloxham, an Old Rugbeian and antiques dealer, to the Rugby School magazine, *The Meteor*. In the first, dated 10 October 1876, he wrote that he had discovered that the change from a kicking game to a handling one had “... originated with a town boy or foundationer of the name of Ellis, Webb Ellis”. Bloxham said that Webb Ellis had handled the ball in 1824. Four years later, on 22 December 1880, he wrote again and added more detail including changing the year of the event to 1823, one year earlier. Bloxham states that the Manchester-born Ellis joined the school in 1816 at the age of nine, and that:

“A boy of the name Ellis – William Webb Ellis – a town boy and a foundationer, ... whilst playing Bigside at football in that half-year [1823], caught the ball in his arms. This being so, according to the then rules, he ought to have retired back

as far as he pleased, without parting with the ball, for the combatants on the opposite side could only advance to the spot where he had caught the ball, and were unable to rush forward till he had either punted it or had placed it for some one else to kick, for it was by means of these placed kicks that most of the goals were in those days kicked, but the moment the ball touched the ground the opposite side might rush on. Ellis, for the first time, disregarded this rule, and on catching the ball, instead of retiring backwards, rushed forwards with the ball in his hands towards the opposite goal, with what result as to the game I know not, neither do I know how this infringement of a well-known rule was followed up, or when it became, as it is now, a standing rule.”

Even if this is true, the idea did not immediately catch on, and “running in” tries did not become accepted practice until the 1830s, by which time Ellis had graduated from Oxford University and taken Holy Orders. He died, unmarried, in the south of France on 24 February 1872. He left £9,000 with some of it going to a society for abandoned women and children. William Webb Ellis was then lost to history until October 1959 when Ross McWhirter (1925-1975), the author and the co-founder of *The Guinness Book Of Records*, and Roger Driès, the former player, discovered his grave in the cemetery of the Vieux Chateau in Menton, where the French Rugby Union provided a new grave. A plaque commemorating Ellis’s mythical act was erected at Rugby School in around 1900. It reads:

THIS STONE  
 COMMEMORATES THE EXPLOIT OF  
 WILLIAM WEBB ELLIS  
 WHO WITH A FINE DISREGARD FOR THE RULES OF  
 FOOTBALL  
 AS PLAYED IN HIS TIME  
 FIRST TOOK THE BALL IN HIS HANDS AND RAN WITH IT  
 THUS ORIGINATING THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURE OF  
 THE RUGBY GAME  
 A.D. 1823

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Only one modern source attempts to date Ellis's supposedly mythical act. The *Unesco World Sports Encyclopaedia* states that it took place on 7 April 1823, which is somewhat at odds with Bloxham's suggestion of "the latter half of 1823".

**FIRST**  
**LAWS OF THE GAMES**

WILLIAM DELAFIELD ARNOLD, W.W. SHIRLEY AND FREDERICK  
 HUTCHINS, SIXTH FORM PUPILS OF RUGBY SCHOOL, WARWICKSHIRE  
 CV22 5EH ENGLAND. THURSDAY 28 AUGUST 1845.



The Rugby Football Union may not have been founded until after the Football Association but the rules of rugby were codified three years earlier than those of the round ball game. The first set of rules was drawn up on 25 August 1845, approved three days later by a committee of Sixth Form pupils, and printed in Rugby by printer J.S. Crossley, its title page proudly stating:

FOOTBALL RULES  
 THE FOLLOWING  
 Rules  
 WERE SANCTIONED BY A LEVÉE OF THE SIXTH,  
 On the 28th of August, 1845,  
 As the  
 LAWS OF FOOTBALL  
 PLAYED  
 At Rugby School

The thirty-seven rules included many terms still in use, such as offside, knock-on, punt, touch and try at goal. However, some rules are no longer relevant, including rule 20 – "All matches are drawn after five days, but after three if no goal has been kicked" – and rule 18: "A player having touched the ball straight for a tree, and touched the tree with it, may drop from either side if he can."

## FIRST REGULAR MANUFACTURERS OF RUGBY BALLS

William Gilbert and Richard Lindon at Lawrence Sheriff Street,  
Rugby, Warwickshire, England. 1840s.

The shape and size of the ball were not written into the rules until 1892, by which time the distinctive oval shape had long been the norm. The balls used by Rugby School, being encased in leather, were made, naturally enough, by two local boot- and shoemakers: Lindon (1816-87), who claimed to have invented the distinctive shaped rugby ball but never patented it, and Gilbert (1799-1877), who exhibited a ball at the Great Exhibition of 1851 and whose firm remains a major manufacturer to this day. The oval shape of the ball is said to have originated from the elongated shape of the pig's bladders used to inflate the balls. These were superseded in the 1860s by India rubber bladders, which enabled the oval shape to be made more exaggerated in order to facilitate handling and passing. Rubber bladders also put an end to tragedies such as that of Lindon's wife, who died of a lung disease thought to have been brought on by the years she spent blowing into pig's bladders to inflate the rugby balls made by her husband.

## FIRST MENTION OF RUGBY IN WALES

St David's College, College Street, Lampeter SA48 7ED Wales. 1850.

In 1850, Old Etonian Reverend Rowland Williams (1817-70) became vice-principal of St David's College, Lampeter where he also taught Hebrew and introduced the game to the principality. The Reverend Mr Williams had previously been a tutor at King's College, Cambridge, when Old Rugbeian Arthur Pell brought the sport to King's and Cambridge. The red strip that is sported by Wales was originally worn by the college side and they are the only club permitted to wear it.

FIRST  
**MENTION OF RUGBY  
 IN SCOTLAND**

EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND. 1854.

In 1854, the brothers Francis and Alexander Crombie moved to Edinburgh from their home in Durham. Francis attended Edinburgh Academy and Alexander set up the Edinburgh Academical Football Club in 1857 and from 1858 until 1864 he was captain. Around the same time and coincidentally rugby began to be played at the Royal High School when an English boy named Hamilton enrolled bringing with him a set of the first Rules of Rugby Football. **The first match between schools** occurred on 13 February 1858 and was between Merchiston and Royal High School.

FIRST  
**MENTION OF RUGBY  
 IN A NOVEL**

*Thomas Hughes, Tom Brown's School Days, published by Macmillan at London, England. Friday 24 April 1857.*

Originally published pseudonymously by "An Old Boy of Rugby", *Tom Brown's School Days* contains a detailed description of a football match at Rugby School with well over a hundred players. After the kick-off, "the two sides close, and you can see nothing for minutes but a swaying crowd of boys, at one point violently agitated. That is where the ball is, and there are the keen players to be met, and the glory and hard knocks to be got... This is what we call 'a scrummage', gentlemen, and the first scrummage in a School-house match was no joke". Then Hughes describes some of the finer points of a game with many recognisable aspects: "chargers"

(forwards), “dodgers” (half-backs), and “quarters” (three-quarters and full-backs); shouts of “off your side” and “in touch”; a lineout, and a touchdown under the posts. But there are no points scored for the touchdown – the ball is kicked out from under the posts to a team-mate who “strikes his heel into the ground to mark the spot where the ball was caught, beyond which the [opposition] may not advance: but there they stand, ready to rush the moment the ball touches the ground”. The catcher then retreats from the mark and places the ball for the kicker to attempt a goal before the opposition can charge him down. The ball sails over the crossbar and the cheers ring out: “A goal in the first hour – such a thing hasn’t been done in the School-house match these five years”.

Note: The first mention of rugby in any form of fiction came in a twenty-four-page booklet published in 1851, entitled *Football: The First Day Of The Sixth Match* (i.e., Sixth Form match), and written by William Delafield Arnold (1828-59), the fourth son of the Rugby School headmaster Thomas Arnold. William Arnold was part of the “levée of Bigside” which drew up the first rules in 1845 (see page 17).

### DID YOU KNOW?

Thomas Hughes was a social reformer as well as a novelist, and on 5 October 1880 he founded the cooperative, class-free, agricultural community of Rugby, Tennessee, for Englishmen wanting to start a new life in America.

## FIRST OPEN RUGBY CLUB

LIVERPOOL FC, AIGBURTH ROAD, LIVERPOOL, MERSEYSIDE L19  
3QF ENGLAND. FOUNDED SATURDAY 19 DECEMBER 1857.



Known simply as Liverpool Football Club, because it was founded before the Football Association and the Rugby Football Union, Liverpool was the first “open” club in the sense that it was not restricted to members of a school, university or other organisation. It came into existence when

Old Rugbeian Frank Albert Mather invited his friend Richard Sykes, then captain of football at Rugby School, to bring a Lindon football (see 1840s) to Liverpool Cricket Club at Edge Hill for a game of rugby football. Some fifty players turned up and Mather organised the match as Rugby (i.e. Rugbeians and Old Rugbeians) v The World. The score is not recorded although five goals were said to have been scored but by whom is not known. The game proved popular enough to warrant forming a club immediately after the game. In 1860 Sykes helped to found the Manchester Club. He later emigrated to the USA, where he founded five towns in North Dakota. He died at Santa Barbara, California, on 31 May 1923, the centenary of the mythical invention of rugby. In 1986, Liverpool FC merged with St Helens to become Liverpool St Helens Football Club.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Rugby Football Union accepts that the first rugby club was Guy's Hospital, founded in London in 1843.

## FIRST SPORT TO DERIVE DIRECTLY FROM RUGBY

**Australian Rules Football. Saturday 31 July 1858.**

Australian Thomas Wentworth Wills (1835-80) was educated at Rugby School from February 1850, where he was noted more for his cricketing prowess than his footballing skills. When he returned to Australia, arriving in Melbourne on 23 December 1856, Wills gained a reputation as one of the best cricketers in Victoria, and on 10 July 1858 a letter from the eminent cricketer was published in *Bell's Life in Victoria & Sporting Chronicle*:

“Now that cricket has been put aside for some few months to come, and cricketers have assumed somewhat of the chrysalis