

SWANSEA RUGBY CLUB

Swansea Rugby Club “The All Whites”, was founded on **26th September 1872** under Association rules. There were no sides within reach who played rugby rules at that time. Soon the relationship with Llandovery College, who DID play rugby rules, persuaded the Swansea players that a fixture list under that code could be maintained. They converted officially to rugby football on 17th October 1874. Since **George Lockwood Morris** won his Welsh cap against Ireland in 1882, **164** players have gained international honours while playing for Swansea, all but 8 of them for Wales. The club has also sent **23** ‘Lions’ on tour, **Fred Jowett** and **Sid Bevan** being the first in 1904. Early games were played on the Bryn y Mor ground in Uplands and the Primrose Field off Constitution Hill, Mount Pleasant. Swansea RFC moved to the new **St Helen’s Field in 1876**, joining the Swansea Cricket Club with whom they share the ground to this day. Their first match there was against Llandovery College on November 4th 1876, which they won by 2 goals and 4 tries to 2 goals. The **St Helens ground** was the venue for the **first Welsh rugby international on home soil in 1882** and was an international venue regularly until 1954, sometimes accommodating as many as 50,000 spectators. It is also well known as a cricket ground for Swansea and Glamorgan Cricket Clubs and was the backdrop to **Gary Sobers’** televised six sixes in one over in 1968. The pitch is famous for its running surface and good draining qualities, having been reclaimed from the sand dunes of Swansea bay.

Early players of note at the club were backs **W H (Bill) Gwynn** and his younger brother **Dai Gwynn**, and forwards **Sam Goldsworthy** and **William Bowen**, all Welsh internationals in the 1880s. Swansea were a founder member of the Welsh Football Union (later called WRU) in 1881 and its first President was former Swansea captain and President **Charles Campbell Chambers**.

The 1890s leading into the new century saw the appearance of full-back **Billy Bancroft**, an astute kicker and natural athlete who gained 33 *consecutive* caps for Wales between 1890 and 1901. Other luminaries were the **James brothers** Evan and David whose exciting play at half-back brought them also into the Welsh side. Their departure to the English Northern League saw a new pair of halves the diminutive **Dickie Owen** (35 Welsh caps) and **Dick Jones** (15 caps) replace them. **Billy Trew**, a rugby genius who had joined the club in 1897, came to maturity in this era. Playing at centre, wing or outside-half, he had a huge influence on Swansea and Wales’ rugby (26 caps). The period 1898-1905 was known as Swansea’s “Golden Era”. They were champion club 6 seasons out of 7 and “Invincible” in 1904-05. Other notable players at this time were: **Will Joseph, George Hayward, George Davies, Willie Arnold, Dan Rees, Fred Scrine, Bill Parker, Edgar Morgan** and **D J Thomas**.

Between the wars Swansea produced players of quality such as **Claude Davey** - the Scott Gibbs of his day – and **Rowe Harding** who was one of *two* Swansea players in the rugby Centenary Match on The Close at Rugby School (1923) and also toured with the ‘Lions’. It was during this period that Swansea defeated New Zealand (1935), the **FIRST EVER** club side to do so and the first to have taken the scalps of the southern hemisphere ‘big three’ following wins over Australia (1908) and South Africa (1912). Eighteen year old Gowerton Schoolboys **Haydn Tanner** and **Willie Davies** masterminded the win over the All Blacks. A hard fought 6 – 6 draw was made with the All Blacks in

1953 at St Helen's and Australia have been beaten a second (1966) and third (1992) time as well as a drawn game in 1973.

The period from the 'fifties to 'seventies saw great names like **Clem Thomas, Billy "Stoker" Williams, Dewi Bebb, Mervyn Davies, Geoff Wheel, Dai Richards** and others grace the St Helen's ground and claim international honours. Swansea were Merit table Champions in 1973-74, 1979/80, 1980/81 and 1982/83 as well as Welsh Cup Winners in 1978.

The 'nineties saw unprecedented success, including being league champions on 4 occasions (1991/92, 1993/94, 1997/98 and 2000/01) and Welsh cup winners in 1995 and 1999. A memorable 21-6 victory was recorded over then **World champions Australia** at St Helens on 4 November 1992. In season 1995/96 Swansea reached the semi-final stage of the European Cup. Household names like **Scott Gibbs, Tony Clement, Robert Jones, Stuart Davies, Mark Taylor, Richard Webster, Colin Charvis, Arwel Thomas, Richard and Paul Moriarty** and **Garin Jenkins** and others were "All Whites" during this period. Richard Moriarty having spanned the 'seventies to 'nineties, achieved an unbeatable record of **469 appearances** for the club and lead the Welsh International side to third place in the inaugural World Cup in 1987.

Since the advent of Regional Rugby in 2003, over 100 players have played for both Swansea and the Ospreys who's first captain in 2003/4 was Swansea RFC triple 'Lion' Scott Gibbs. As a development club for the region Swansea have consistently produced quality players for region and country including **Alun Wyn Jones, Richard Hibbard, Dan Biggar, Jonathan Thomas, Gavin Henson** and more recently **Scott Baldwin, Dan Baker, Eli Walker, Hanno Dirksen, Nicky Smith and Matthew Morgan** and **Keelan Giles** to name a few.

Whilst proud to look back on an illustrious history, Swansea RFC is a dynamic forward looking club. **Our track record for player development within the Region is self-evident.** Consistency in this endeavour has made the club an attractive environment that young players are keen to be a part of. In 2016-17 Swansea were promoted back to the top semi-pro league in Wales, the Principality Premiership.

The 2016-17 season also marks the 50th anniversary of Swansea's second win over Australia in 1966, which will be marked by a Former Players Dinner where the 14 members of that 1966 side, still with us, will be honoured. The season also marks the 140th anniversary of the first rugby match after the club moved to St Helen's in 1876. This will be marked by a match between Llandovery College and a Swansea School XV. Llandovery College were the original opponents in 1876.

In another innovative move, a Women's Team has been added to the Swansea Club for 2016-17. They in turn have responded by wearing the famous white jersey with pride and now are one of Wales' leading Women's rugby teams, helping to promote the women's game in Wales through the professional approach they take themselves and the enjoyment of the game as it should be played. Under their Head Coach Nick Edwards and captain **Siwan Lillicrap**, a player capped by Wales herself, the team already has several Welsh international players and is a beacon for talented players in the Swansea area. The current Welsh women's squad includes Swansea WRFC players: **Keira Bevan, Amy Evans, Kerin Lake, Siwan Lillicrap** and **Adi Taviner**.