

Exeter's Second Season 1873-4

Almost inevitably the first match of this season was played against the Training College on the college ground. The result was declared to be a draw though the Training College were much the better side. Exeter's captain for this second season was C.B. Sanders who served the club well and was appointed Sheriff of Exeter in 1889.

The second game, played early in November, was unique in the club's history. A match was played at Newton Abbot against the local club which Exeter won by two goals to one. This result was not expected as, according to press reports, "Association rules were recognised by the Exeter men for the first time"!

A week later there was another first for the club, namely a venture outside the county boundaries. The team travelled to Sherborne to play against the school. The game was lost but the team was urged not to be discouraged for "the Sherborne men have constant practice and larger numbers to select from. "Passing on" is where they excel." At this time school teams would also include members of staff in their ranks.

At Victoria Park the return match against the Training College was again drawn with the students having the best of the play. Exeter then ventured to Teignmouth where the local club, styled Wanderers, was decisively defeated. Another convincing win followed against the A.N.Y. club in Exeter. The game was expected to be a close one but Exeter prevailed being "three men to the good". One of the Exeter players who excelled was named Batten. This is quite likely to have been one John Maxwell Batten who as a member of Cambridge University was capped by England against Scotland in 1874. The Batten family were Exeter residents and J.M. and his brother A. Batten played occasional games for the club. One could claim that J.M. Batten was Exeter's first international player.

At the end of February, at Victoria Park, a third match was played against the Training College ending in a just victory for the students who this time managed to kick a goal to thus claim their superiority. For the final match of the season new opponents, in the form of Ottery St. Mary, travelled to the city where in good conditions but with a high wind the Exonians won by a goal, ten touch-downs and thirteen saves to nil. This domination would have been all in vain had not the captain, C.B. Sanders, kicked the vital winning goal!

The playing record for the season is recorded as being Played 11 Won 5 Drawn 4 and Lost 2. You will note that descriptions of only eight games have been mentioned and that included the soccer game against Newton Abbot which, I am sure, was regarded as being an official game! The other three games to make up the balance are likely to have been internal club matches. Two Ten v. The Rest matches were played (on December 20 and January 3) whilst a Residents v. Non-Residents game took place on Christmas Eve. The outstanding player for the Non Residents was J.M. Batten!

RSH