

9th Season 1880-1

A full fixture list of eighteen matches was published at the start of this season. There were no new names on the list though the Weston team was sometimes referred to as Weston Rangers and, after its various early guises, the South Devon team was now known as Torquay Athletic. Again a fixture against Plymouth, this time on a neutral ground at Totnes, was included but like earlier fixtures no outcome of the match has come to light.

Press reports of only eight matches have so far been found and in comparison with earlier years it can be judged that Exeter might have experienced a poor season overall. Of the eight games for which details can be found only three were won - Blundell's at home and away and Barnstaple at home by a try to nil. Defeats came at the hands of Weston, Wellington, Teignmouth, Newton College and Torquay.

The new captain was William Carter Richards who had learned his rugby at Cheltenham College. Under his leadership it was hoped that the club "will still maintain that foremost position it has long held among the Football Clubs of the county". Whatever the hopes it is apparent that the club had problems getting a representative team together for some matches. In November Exeter beat Barnstaple when playing twelve men against fourteen and followed this by losing to Torquay playing thirteen against twelve. What must have been disturbing was the fact that these were both home games. The team had also played one short at Blundell's earlier in the season.

Richards had been a regular since 1877-8 usually playing in the forwards. He was a prominent member of the local Volunteers and at the time of his retirement in 1910 held the rank of Lieutenant Colonel with the 1st Rifle Volunteers. He served on the board of St. Anne's Well Brewery and was a leading figure in amateur theatricals. He died in 1931 aged 76. In the victory at Blundell's in October of the season currently under review, Exeter scored seven tries but only the final one of which was converted into a goal to win the game. The captain was the successful kicker.

Jimmy Hutchings had again been appointed vice-captain in what was to be his final season. Apart from appearing for the Flamingoes club (a founder club of the R.F.U.) in London he had made at least 40 appearances for Exeter.

The opening match of the season gives another glimpse of the composition of club membership. In an earlier season the Law played the World, in this season it was Oxford & Cambridge facing the World. The varsities played one short yet won the game which took place on "the Club Ground at the back of Topsham Barracks. Commencing 3 p.m. punctually". Of the combined team at least ten players had previously appeared for the city team as had all the members of the World XV.