

Wales fell in love with rugby over 100 years ago, and this national affair with the game remains as intense and intoxicating today as it was in the late 1800s, when tens of thousands of passionate and expectant supporters would make their way to the Arms Park to see Wales play the best teams in the world and to enjoy the famous match-day atmosphere in Cardiff's bustling town centre. The Welsh obsession for rugby was already evident in 1899 when supporters packed Cardiff's Westgate Street from wall to wall for a Triple Crown decider against Ireland, and an advocate of soccer in Cardiff commented in 1901: to carry one of those funny round balls through the streets meant running the gauntlet of curious onlookers. Rugby was undoubtedly the sporting heartbeat of Cardiff with over 230 clubs in 1895; but how did this obsession with rugby grip Cardiff and the industrial towns of south Wales, and why did the Welsh quickly become this rugby spellbound people? In this new, expanded and heavily illustrated paperback edition, Gwyn Prescott draws on previously unused sources to provide a fresh and fascinating insight into the origins and early years of the game in Cardiff. He outlines how its citizens of all backgrounds, its many distinct districts, and its commercial and religious interests took rugby to their hearts through the growth of clubs, competitions and the establishment of the famous Arms Park as the focal point of rugby in Wales. *The Birth of Rugby in Cardiff and Wales* is the essential guide to the importance of rugby in Cardiff and to the significance of Cardiff to the development of Welsh rugby in the nineteenth century.

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