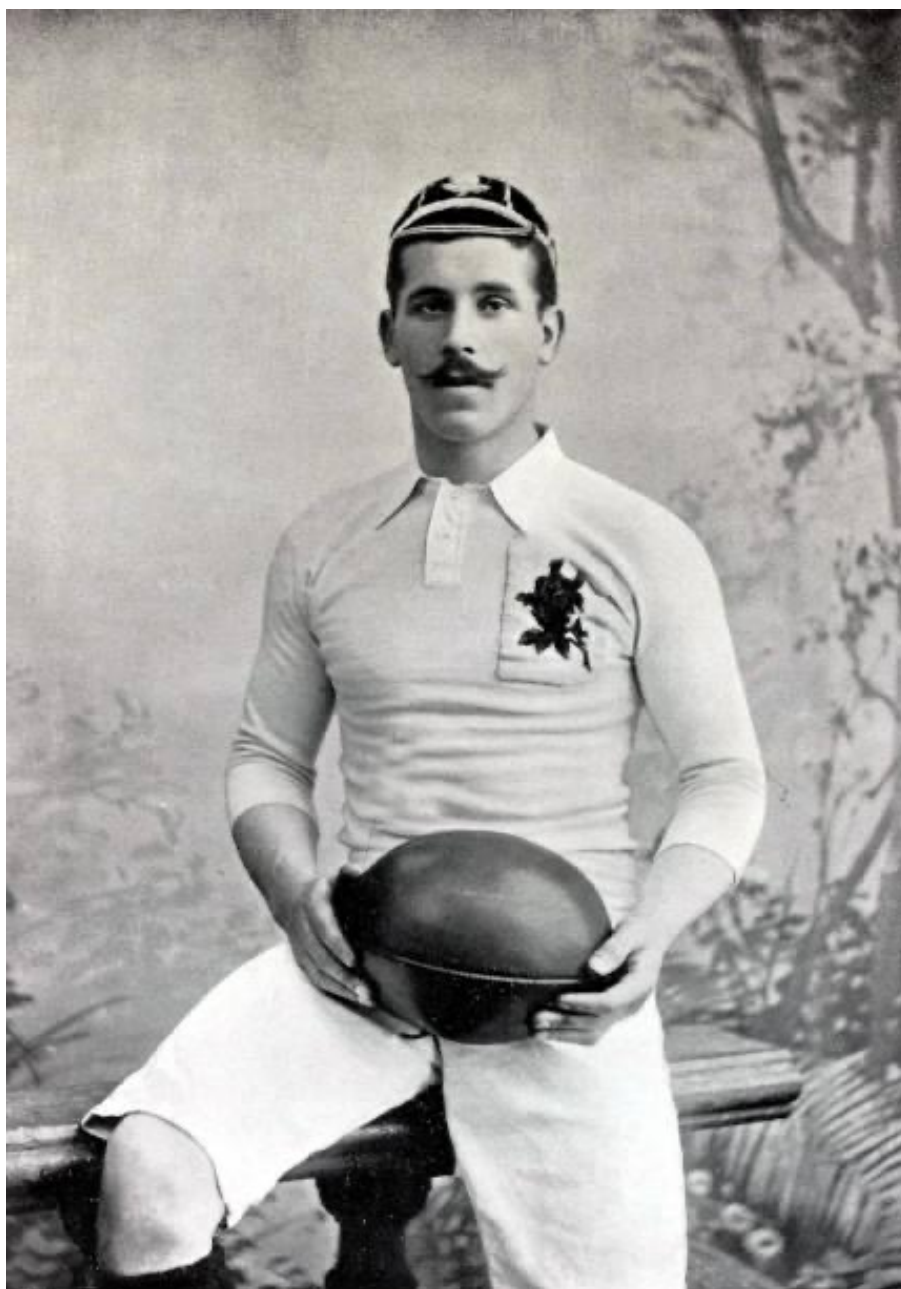


Richard Henry Burdon Cattell 1871-1948

Stratford upon Avon RFC Player, England Rugby Captain, WW I Military Chaplain and vicar.

This is the story of Stratford upon Avon RFC's first England International player and the only ordained Minister to captain England



Richard's family

Richard Cattell was born in Erdington, Birmingham on 23 March 1871, the second son of Thomas Cattell and his wife Maria Cattell (née Hoitt). Thomas & Maria were respectively from Beausale (near Hatton) and Henley in Arden (just north of Stratford). Thomas and Maria had been married in Henley in Arden Church on September 6th, 1866, when they were quite mature, 36 and 34 respectively.

Thomas's father (Richard Cattell's grandfather), Joseph, was already a farmer near Rowington in 1851 and Thomas followed on the family tradition, living in Erdington on the Chester Road (from the 1860's to his death in 1914) . His farm was over 500 acres.

Trinity College (1883 -1889)

Just before Richard's birth, in 1867, the Holy Trinity Church in Stratford had appointed a new vicar John Day Collis. He still had academic career ambitions (former Head of Bromsgrove School) and in 1871 he acquired the building which would become Trinity College in Stratford from 1873-1902, on Old Town right opposite the end of Church Street.



There had been a church college for clerics since the Middle Ages just opposite Shakespeare's Holy Trinity church until about 1800 (hence the official name of Holy Trinity is " The Collegiate Church of the Holy and undivided Trinity")

But Rev Collis wanted to start the equivalent of a public school with boarders also ready to produce future military, government and business leaders. And by the 1880's, Trinity College was in full swing and a good reputation was being developed. In this environment and with the family's local connections and knowledge of the area, young Mr. Richard HB Cattell was a student at Trinity College through his teenage years from 1883 to 1889.

Trinity College supported its boys playing Rugby and the young men were avid Rugby players and often used to beat the local Clubs in the new Sport . Richard was a fly-half and, in his last year, captain of the Trinity College side. The descriptions of his play compliment him not only on his ball distribution and running but also on his tough tackling.

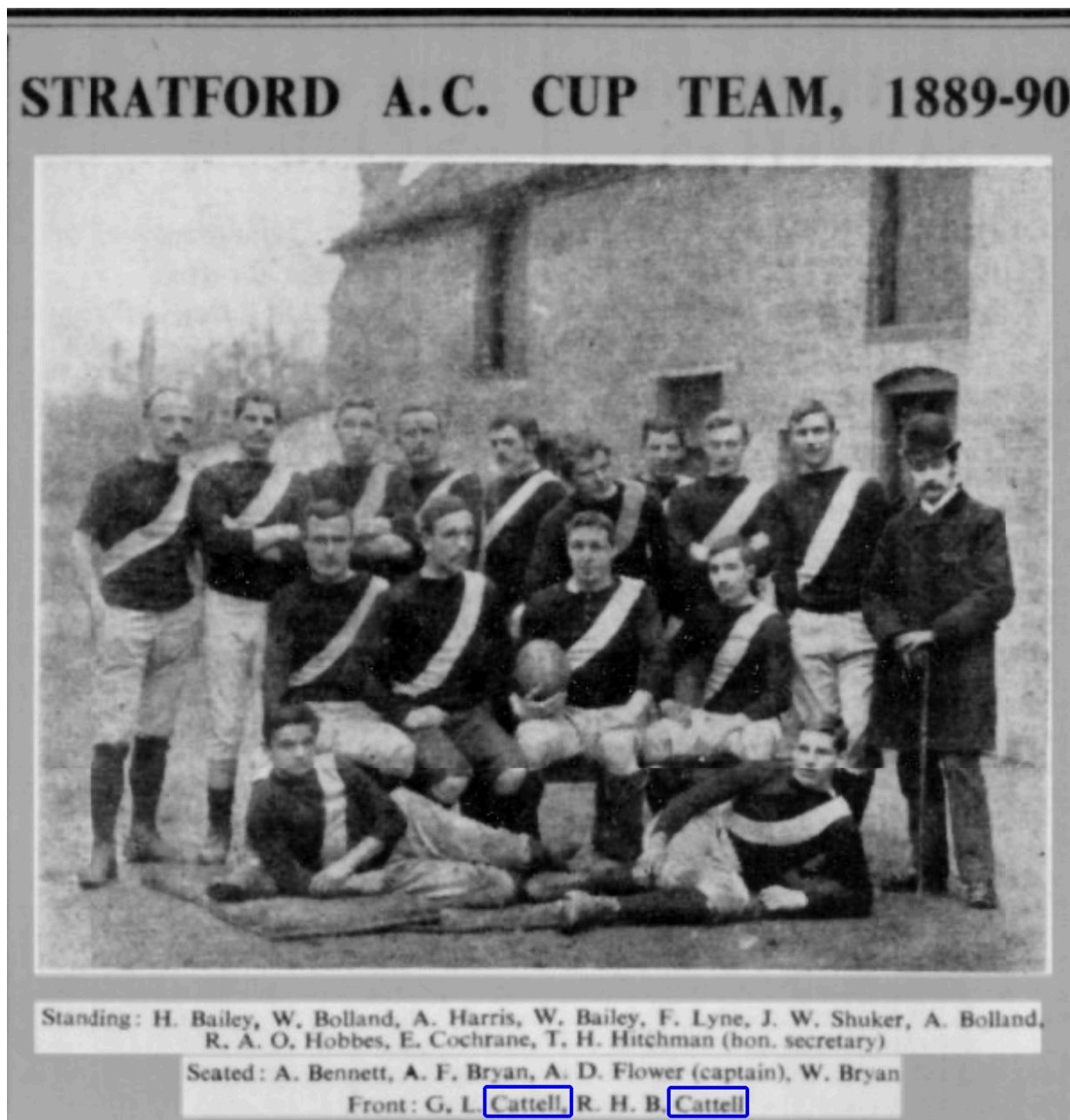


Rev John Day Collis

Stratford-on-Avon Rugby Football Club 1889-90

Stratford upon Avon RFC had been established by the mid-1870's and by the mid-1880's had been operating as the Rugby section (named the Football section) of the Stratford Athletic Club. In modern times, by historic convention, the official start of the Stratford on Avon Rugby Football Club has been taken as 1877 even though it was a couple of years before that. In the 1880's, Stratford upon Avon Rugby Football Club, as it became, was still part of the Athletic Club. Also in newspaper reports of the time, rugby was often referred to in newspaper reports then as just football, with soccer referred to differently as "the association game".

By 1889 Richard HB Cattell graced the field as a first team player for Stratford upon Avon and the Club has pictures of him playing for the Club in 1889 (lying front right - see below). I think this is a special kit for the Midland Counties Cup.



Interestingly the G.L. Cattell lying to Richard Cattell's left was no relation to Richard (contrary to what other writers have indicated). Gilbert Landale Cattell was of army stock, born in Dublin, son of a Colonel, went on from Trinity College to Sandhurst, served in India, and died a retired major in 1942 at the age of 70.

Stratford's season in 1889/90 was impressive. Archie Flower (from the Flower's brewing family) who rowed for Cambridge in the Boat Race 1886, was Club Captain. And a golden season followed with the two young Cattell's attending Trinity College playing for Stratford.

During this season for Stratford , 22 matches were played with 16 won, 3 drawn and 3 lost with 29 goals and 38 tries against only 3 goals and 7 tries. Leicester were beaten pointless three times and two draws were against Coventry.

The Midlands Counties' Cup was the big thing at the time (with no leagues then). The semi-final of the Midland Counties' Cup Final was reached after beating Leicester and Moseley. The latter game was a desperate affair, Stratford winning the semi-final by 5 minors to nil (cup-tie rules: a majority of 3 minors in the event of a no-score gave that side victory). Unfortunately Stratford was narrowly beaten in the 1889-90 Cup final by Burton. But this season's achievement temporarily raised Stratford to the level of a senior Club.

Maybe it was the victory over Moseley that brought Richard Cattell to the attention of Moseley and Richard's family home was much nearer Moseley RFC than Stratford.

Oxford University 1890-1893

Richard attended Exeter College at Oxford, receiving a BA degree and continued playing Rugby at Oxford. He received a "blue" for Rugby in 1893 . It would have been at Oxford that his talents were noted by the Selectors for future representative matches. Here is a picture of him in the Oxford Team in 1893 (back Row, 2'nd from Right), now sporting a moustache.



Gillman & Co.

OXFORD XV., 1893.

R. B. Littlewood.	E. R. Balfour.	H. T. S. Gedge.	J. A. Smith.	A. H. Colvile.	A. C. Elwes.	R. H. B. Cattell.	D. W. Donaldson.
F. O. Poole.	(G. N. Carey.)		J. Conway-Rees.		C. D. Baker.		W. P. Donaldson.
	L. C. Humfrey.		E. M. Baker.		W. L. Thomas.		

Other senior Rugby Clubs he played for

After playing for Stratford Rugby Club (as his first real Rugby Club per-se as opposed to his college team), Richard also played for other clubs, notably **Leicester** borrowed him from Stratford for a short tour in Wales. This may have whetted his appetite for later tours with the Barbarians (see later). After leaving Stratford for Oxford University, he played regularly for **Moseley** rugby club when he was back home from University between terms. (His family home was in Erdington, Birmingham.) He even played for Moseley against Stratford within a couple of years, and to add salt in the wound, he scored an impressive try running right through the Stratford defence. He would be followed in history by other promising Stratford players leaving the Stratford club to play for Moseley. This path to Moseley was followed by Stratford's other England international, Tom Pargetter, over sixty years later. Richard Cattell also played regularly for **Blackheath** somewhat later when he was preparing for his holy orders and after he was ordained as a vicar from 1897.

The Barbarians F.C. (1893-1900)

Everyone these days has heard of the Barbarians. The Club has such an illustrious history now, taking players from all parts of the world and always including one uncapped player. The Barbarians were formed in 1890 by William Percy Carpmael. He loved the concept of Rugby tours. He had played Rugby at Cambridge University where he had been on Rugby tours with the University team in the 1880's

His idea – collecting a touring side from all sources to tackle a few leading clubs in the land – received strong support from leading players, particularly ex-university players. On 8 April 1890, in Leuchters Restaurant and later at the Alexandra Hotel in Bradford, the concept of the Barbarians was agreed upon. The first Barbarians game was at Hartlepool Rovers on 27 December 1890.

Richard HB Cattell played for the Barbarians in 8 matches between 1893 and 1900 and no doubt as he put on the Black & White hooped shirt he would have the happy memory of donning his Stratford Shirt with the same colours when he was a younger man of 18 and 19.

These are the games he played as the Barbarians' Fly Half, showing date, location and result:

26 Dec 1893 / National Stadium

Cardiff 14 : 3 Barbarians

27 Dec 1893 / Rodney Parade

Newport 19 : 0 Barbarians

26 Dec 1895 / Friarage

Hartlepool Rovers 8 : 8 Barbarians

27 Dec 1895 / South Shields

South Shields 5 : 27 Barbarians

24 Dec 1896 / Memorial Stadium

Barbarians 0 : 0 West of England

26 Dec 1896 / Rodney Parade

Newport 16 : 0 Barbarians

15 Feb 1899 / Rectory Field

Stade Francais Paris 0 : 33 Barbarians

07 Feb 1900 / Rectory Field

Barbarians 41 : 3 Le Havre

In this last game above, he has just been dropped by England so this last game for the Barbarians must have been some consolation.

Here is the photo before his last International holding the ball as England captain. He is aged 28 here (though the program says 27) and a bit thicker than his younger days and no moustache.



The game was not a success for the English or Gloucester. One temporary stand built for the crowd collapsed before the game. The crowd was smaller than expected as the RFU insisted that Gloucester charge a shilling (which was out of the reach of many working people). And the RFU took a fixed free, so the game made a loss and nearly bankrupted the Gloucester club.

On the pitch, Wales won 13-3. A rugby correspondent summarised the game as follows:

"It must be confessed that the game was a little disappointing, the play for the most part being only moderate. The Welshmen quite deserved their victory, but with a little luck the game might easily have gone the other way."

England's only try was described as follows:

"England went onto the attack after the resumption for half-time, and narrowly missed one scoring chance before Dick Cattell passed out to George Marsden, who sold a dummy and drew the fullback before passing out to Elliot Nicholson, who sprinted over in the corner."

There were two serious injuries. A Welshman broke his arm and played on (even scoring) . No replacements were allowed in Rugby Union until 1968 in competitive matches and tactical replacements only in 1996. An England player had a severe head injury and was removed from the pitch. Until replacements for injury were allowed, a rugby team was just 15 and some games were more like a war of attrition with the walking wounded just put out on the wing. The game was different before 1968.

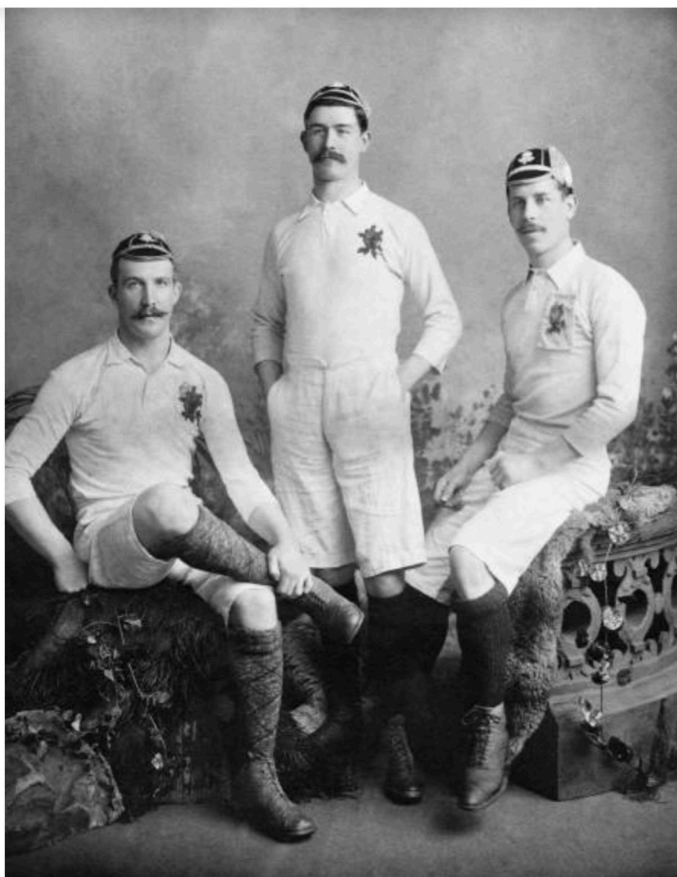
Richard's Ordination & Marriage

As mentioned, Richard was ordained in Tring in 1897 and later served as vicar in Berhampstead Church. He served as vicar in two other parishes (described later) but his work in English churches was interrupted by World War 1 (see next section)

He married Cleophé Boynton in **1905** when he was 35. The wedding in Tring where Richard was a curate was reported as a joyous affair in the local paper. The paper indicated that Reverend Richard was very popular locally and had helped local lads set up an Association Football Club (yes, soccer !).

The same report listed the wedding gifts and donors including Lord and Lady Rothschild who knew Richard as they had set up a natural history museum in Tring. Among the many wedding guests listed in the newspaper were Mr & Mrs J.F. Byrne .

James Frederic Byrne and Richard Henry Burdon Cattell were team mates at Moseley RFC and for England. James' brother Francis also played for Moseley and received one England cap in 1897. Here is a staged photo (of circa 1897/98) of the 3 Moseley players, namely the two Byrne brothers with Richard Cattell seated on the right hand side.



So Richard and James were not only team-mates but obviously good friends and still in touch in 1905 at the time of Richard's wedding. The Cattell marriage produced 7 children, all daughters.

World War 1 (1914 - 1918) & Gallipoli

Richard interrupted his parish duties at Berkhamstead and was enlisted as a Military Chaplain and went back to his normal duties after the Armistice in 1918.

Richard served in Gallipoli for the whole Gallipoli Campaign.

In summary, in case you are not familiar, Gallipoli was a disastrous failed operation to attempt to attack the Ottoman Empire in 1915 on a peninsula in the North Eastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea about 200 miles South West of Istanbul. The flawed project was heavily promoted and supported by Winston Churchill (First Lord of the Admiralty at the time) .

It involved 500,000 British, Commonwealth and French troops of which 50,000 were Australian and 15,000 New Zealanders. Of those 500,000, there were about 250,000 casualties in 11 months, of which 50,000 were killed and the rest of the casualties were either wounded or struck down by disease. By the time the operation was called off in January 1916, Churchill was fired from his post and left Government. The Ottomans considered it a victory, albeit a costly one for them with double the number of the Allies' casualty total.

Richard Cattell was military chaplain for the 53rd Royal Field Artillery Division in Gallipoli and for the same 53rd Division's Casualty Clearing station attending the wounded, sick and dying there. I can imagine these memories stayed with him the rest of his life, much more clearly than playing Rugby for England.

Here is a photo of a meeting of Military Chaplains in the Gallipoli campaign taken on 24 May 1915.



Richard's History as a vicar

(1) Tring (1897-1906)

Richard was ordained in 1897 and became a vicar in Tring and up to the time of his marriage in 1905. He had 3 postings subsequent to this.

(2) Berkhamstead ("Sunnyside"), Surrey 1906-1923

This is only 7 miles from Tring. Richard was vicar while a new church building was built to replace an old iron structure from 1908-12. He was there at the laying of the foundation stone in 1908. As one can imagine, a new church (St. Michael & All Angels) was a mammoth undertaking, with the church successfully completed and lastly the family moved into the new vicarage by 1912. Then came the Great War which interrupted Richard's parish duties and family life.

Here is a different Team Photo, Richard in the middle of the Church Choir at Berkhamstead. It is rumoured that he organised this group into a soccer team but no evidence remains of that.



(3) Watlington, Norfolk, (St Peter & St Paul) 1923- 1928 - near Kings Lynn

I found nothing actually from his time at Watlington, but I did find reference later to his founding West Norfolk Rugby Football Club. That might have been at this time.

(4) Warham, Norfolk 1928-1947 and Richard's death 1948

So Richard lived his last 20 years here in Warham. His death left his widow Cleophé and his 7 adult daughters. This tablet was erected in Warham Church after his death in 1948. Short but rather comprehensive.



I did not find too much more about Richard's life in Warham. I include just one happy episode. I think Richard's 20 years at Warham was largely a happy end to his life. I leave you with probably one of the happiest days of his entire life, the marriage of his first born daughter Phyllis in 1936. This is a summary of the report of the wedding in the Lynn Advertiser 10 July **1936**.

At Warham Church, the eldest daughter Phyllis Barbara Cleophé Cattell of Rev. Richard Henry Burdon Cattell and Mrs Cleophé Cattell was married to Mr. Patrick Seton Luffman of Overstratton, Somerset.

The service was conducted by the bride's father who is rector of Warham. The bride was given away by the Bride's uncle Mr. Bertram Cattell. The bridesmaids were the bride's sisters, plus Miss Madge Foster, and Miss Jill Luffman. The Reception afterwards was held at the Warham rectory. The honeymoon is to be spent in Cornwall.

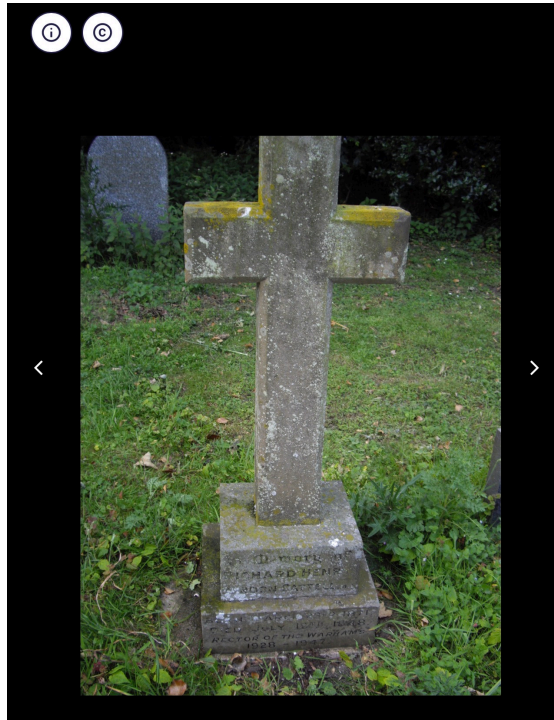
That must have been a happy and proud day for the Reverend Richard Henry Burdon Cattell, a devoted Christian, Rugby Union star of Stratford upon Avon RFC, the England national team, the Barbarians, England Captain, surviving Veteran of the Gallipoli Campaign and long serving vicar, family man and father of 7.

Richard's death is recorded at Fakenham in 1948. He retired as rector of Warham Church in 1947.

Cleophé Cattell (Richard's wife) lived on until 1973. It was interesting for me to read, in the Lynn Advertiser report of her death in 1973, the small note that Richard had formed the West Norfolk Rugby Football Club in the 1920's - which still exists today.

Stratford upon Avon RFC here recognises and honours its former player, Reverend Cattell.

(Below is a photo of his grave at Warham Church, Norfolk.)



Acknowledgements:

- 1) The late Dr. Ken Holley former President of Stratford upon Avon RFC who before his death had made me promise (out loud) to claim Richard Cattell for our Club. God bless you, my friend.*
- 2) Moseley Rugby Club, Oxford University , England RFU for using some of the research enclosed.*
- 3) Mr. Martin Kenny who researched and wrote an article for the Stratford Herald Focus magazine in February 2013 on Richard Cattell and has been very supportive. Thank you, Martin.*
- 4) Ros from Berhampstead Church -thank you for the Centenary Book.*
- 5) Stratford upon Avon Rugby Club for which I played (rather badly) for circa 500 games always very proud to don the Black & White shirt.*

*John Martin, Stratford upon Avon RFC
(June 2026)*