

# Club points



News for Hitchin Rugby Football Club members

Issue 30 • January 2014



U 11's with Harrow RFC

## LV= help to celebrate 60 years of the Hitchin Hedgehogs

**2014 sees a significant milestone reached for Hitchin Rugby Club as it celebrates 60 years since its founding in 1954.**

Now, with approaching 800 members across the full spectrum of rugby including boys, girls, ladies and men HRFC is thriving as an example to all local sports clubs, heavily supported by the local businesses and run by an army of local volunteers.

Throughout its 60th year celebrations the support of sponsors, such as Hitchin based LV=, has enabled HRFC to focus on ensuring the whole club are able to experience live rugby, with trips to Saracens, and also hold events at the club with local teams involved.

With players from five years old to over 50 there really is something for everyone at Hitchin Rugby Club, during this important celebratory year the club have invited a number of opposition teams to bring their youth sides to play a curtain opener on the flagship Hitchin pitch, a facility that is held in high esteem across the rugby community. This unique opportunity to blend all ages in the club has been the perfect demonstration of Hitchin's 'One Club' ethos. To date we have entertained Stevenage, Datchworth

and Harrow rugby clubs, with Fullerians RFC due here on 8 February.

Hitchin would like to invite new members and supporters to join them and not just celebrate the last 60 years but plan for an exciting future. Club Chairman, Richard Lucas, says: "At Hitchin Rugby Club we have a clear aim to create an environment that develops the sport of rugby for the benefit of our members and our local community, over the past 60 years the club has built very strong foundations and is in great shape to move forward. None of what we have, and will, achieve could be done without the support of our generous sponsors and the tremendous effort from all our volunteers. It is quite humbling to see the hours of volunteer time that members are willing to put towards ensuring that players get to develop and enjoy their rugby, whilst also learning life skills that will serve them well for many years."



Hitchin families at Sarries



At LV=, we're all about helping people protect and provide for the things they love. This is something we care passionately about and we hope it shows in the way we work with you

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# Hitchin Rugby Academy – LOOKING GOOD!

**The second season for the Hitchin Rugby Academy for 16 to 19 year olds has been going very well.**

The Under 16s joined with two squads – the first Hitchin age group with two teams in the Herts Middlesex leagues. Both of the teams were promoted last season and both are mid-table in their new leagues so far this year, the A team in Division 2 and the B team in Division 5. They have joined in very well and have bought into the Academy ethos of fitness and a defined game style and pace. They will be the backbone of a competitive Academy team over the next two years.

The Academy team this season is an amalgam of Under 17s and Under 18s. Some real talent is on display and ten of them have already made their senior debuts including Ruirí Shanahan as a first team regular. We also have Harry Chater

at Bedford Blues Academy and Euan Dickson Earle at Saracens Academy.

On the field, the Academy team, at the time of writing, are into the 4th round of the National Cup (the furthest any Hitchin team has progressed) where they will play Ealing, await Northampton Mens Own RFC in the LV Cup and should progress in the County Plate.

The rationale of the Academy is to provide the best possible rugby coaching in North Hertfordshire across this senior youth group, combine players into a representative Academy team and smooth the entry of these players into senior rugby. Thanks to all the coaches and volunteers that make it happen.

Thanks also to our new sponsor Weatherbreak Windows, who are providing academy shirts for our new entrants this season.

Tim Jeffries



Sam Underwood wins lineout v London New Zealanders

## Senior rugby

**The 1 XV have found it hard to compete with a loss of players to university, plus unfortunate injuries to key personnel.**

The re-emergence of Harrow and OMT's have produced hard fixtures, and other results see the team languishing at the bottom of the league, now that London New Zealanders have left the fray. As a true amateur club we are competing well in a division where some clubs have a different approach.

But a significant improvement over recent weeks gives hope for a revival in fortunes, with coach Adam Shaw looking for real commitment from his players for the rest of the season.

## VP's corner

Greetings to you all. I trust that you are recovered from the traditional seasonal excesses and are now ready for more!

We have had three lunches so far and they continue to be a resounding success. Whilst they continue to raise much needed funds for our Club, we should not forget that the primary aim is to afford us oldies (yes I know, Ferret – I am just referring to myself) to enjoy a meal in the company of like-minded folk. I hope we can maintain this ethos into the future.

There are two lunch opportunities left this season:

8th February and  
5th April – I look forward to seeing you, both then and at other matches.

Martin Howard,  
Vice President



Hitchin Academy in action in their win against Old Albanians U18

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# Kids First Rugby

Hitchin RFC are helping the RFU with one of the most unusual appointments in its history, unleashing animated and excitable English Bulldog Ruckley as the official ambassador for children's rugby.

As well as helping make the sport more engaging and easier to understand for our young fans, Ruckley's first job will be to help explain and promote Kids First Rugby, the RFU's new approach to the way mini rugby is played.

Gary Townsend, RFU Player Development Manager, shaped the scheme and explained how the sport is broken down into bite-sized chunks for kids to understand.

"Our Kids First approach aims to enhance the rugby experience for young players, coaches and parents to help keep more players in the game," he said

"The focus is on the child and giving them a bite-sized, manageable programme so players of all abilities can develop at their own pace. Kids First Rugby also manages the transition through the introduction of contact, which we believe is a vital factor in retaining young players into the future."

The Kids First Programme is a new approach based upon research by Exeter University which the RFU commissioned in 2007 to identify how to improve the skills levels of young players and to help retain them into the adult game.

Hitchin RFC have been selected as one of only 18 clubs in England to participate in a Kids First Pilot programme. Tony Robinson, (RFU Coach and Player development Officer) held an open session at the Club on Friday 17th Jan attended by 60 coaches and parents to go through the pilot programme that will be running through our mini section (U6 to U12). This was followed the next day with 40 coaches working through the theory in a practical session.



Girls U 15's at OMT's

## Mini & youth – a great start to the season!

**We've had fantastic rugby facilitated by an extended bout of really superb weather leading up to the Christmas break and I am happy to report that it has been a tremendous first half for Hitchin Mini & Youth Section.**

With 116 new players this season, the continued growth of our now 432 strong membership is glowing testimony to the high standards of rugby being provided by the 80+ coaches and coaching assistants from across all age groups.

On a sad note, the U14's did not have a sufficient number to create a full team and had to withdraw from their league.

The development of Hitchin youth girls rugby continues to be a priority as going forward we look to developing a girls U18 squad.

As we begin the second half of the season with all the flooding being experienced around the country, it was not so surprising that recent heavy rainfall took its toll leaving pitches and



Under 9's celebrate at Letchworth

training areas with significant patches of standing water. So, with the safety of players our primary concern as well as a need to preserve the condition of the playing areas, M&Y were regrettably forced to cancel both fixtures and training for the first time this season. As always on such occasions the updated news regarding fixtures and training plans was posted on the club website at the earliest opportunity where the message appeared to have been received by everyone.



*HG Construction supporting the youth of today and building for the future.*

**A Hitchin based construction company working regionally, producing high quality, energy efficient and sustainable buildings to meet all the needs of our Clients.**

**We wish Hitchin Rugby Club every success with their plans both on and off the pitch for the future.**

**For the latest news and projects at HG Construction, visit our website at [www.hgconstruct.co.uk](http://www.hgconstruct.co.uk)**



## Lease update

Following continued negotiations with NHDC and the site Trustees appointed this time last year, we have made significant progress towards a new lease agreement.

We now anticipate being in a position sign off on a new lease before the end of March and this will allow us to proceed with Phase 1 of our changing room redevelopment project over the summer months.

The new lease will secure our tenure for the foreseeable future and will greatly enhance the opportunity for the club to attract additional funding for phases 2-4 of the redevelopment project.

The self-contained changing room and shower facilities delivered by phase 1 will provide us with sufficient space to provide changing for all teams and for men women and children concurrently in a safe and secure environment.

## DIARY DATES

5 March Annual sponsors dinner, with comedian and rugby speaker.  
For tickets email Carwyn Morgan (Carwyn@stid.co.uk)

5 April VP's lunch

### LV= WEEKEND

25 April John Drew Cup

26 April Ladies 10-a-side tournament

27 April LV= U18's cup, finals day

09 May M&Y end of season dinner

10 May Seniors' end of season dinner (60th year)



Action from last years ladies tournament



## Watch on TV in the clubhouse

- Saturday 8 February, 2.30pm – Ireland v Wales
- Saturday 8 February, 5pm – Scotland v ENGLAND
- Sunday 9 February, 3pm – France v Italy
- Friday 21 February, 8pm – Wales v France
- Saturday 22 February, 1.30pm – Italy v Scotland
- Saturday 22 February, 4pm – ENGLAND v Ireland
- Saturday 8 March, 2.30pm – Ireland v Italy
- Saturday 8 March, 5pm – Scotland v France
- Sunday 9 March, 3pm – ENGLAND v Wales
- Saturday 15 March, 12.30pm – Italy v ENGLAND
- Saturday 15 March, 2.45pm – Wales v Scotland
- Saturday 15 March, 5pm – France v Ireland

Come and support the bar!



Don't forget to log on to our website!

[www.hitchinrugby.com](http://www.hitchinrugby.com)

