

# Club points

News for Hitchin Rugby Football Club members

Issue 31 • August 2014

## weekend of rugby to celebrate 60 years for hedgehogs

**Hitchin RFC brought the season to a close with a superb three days of rugby, sponsored by the club's main sponsor LV=**

Friday night saw the Presidents U23's playing the Chairman's Over 23 team for the John Drew cup, as an opener for the weekend. The result was a 34-24 win for the U23s and both teams were filled with players who had come through the club's youth system. Great to see, and the club looks forward to its Academy players all joining the U23 team (and then over 23s) in the years to come.

The match was followed by a celebratory 60th year dinner, attended by a large number of former players

Saturday was the turn of the ladies, as six teams, including tourists from Ashbourne in Derbyshire, took part in a "Super 10's" rugby tournament, refereed by junior referees from Hitchin.

At the end of an exhausting afternoon of rugby, Old Albanians emerged as winners of the Ladies LV= cup, with Welwyn runners up

On Sunday, the main event, the LV= Under 18 Cup finals, hosted by Hitchin



Shelford RFC receive LV= cup from Hitchin president Tim Jeffries

RFC for the 3rd year. This competition showcases the best talent as players move on into senior rugby

The plate final was contested by Tring RFC and Hertford RFC, with Tring winning by 25-15.

Shelford RFC had a surprisingly

comfortable 45-10 win in the cup final against Fullerians RFC, who struggled all the game with the pace of the opponents' backs. The match brought to an end a great finals day with a terrific atmosphere and an excellent game of rugby to round off an exciting LV= cup.

## £6,000 funding boost for Second XV pitch

**Hitchin Rugby Club has been awarded £6,000 of National Lottery funding from Sport England's Flood Relief Fund to repair the Second XV rugby pitch badly damaged by flooding earlier this year.**

In February, Sport England launched a £5 million Flood Relief Fund in a bid to help clean up and repair sports pitches and facilities and get them back up and running. Hitchin Rugby will use the £6000 award to resurface its Second XV pitch that was waterlogged and unplayable for over ten weeks at the height of last season.

Jennie Price, Chief Executive of Sport England, commented: "The storms and



floods devastated many sports facilities across England. We want to play our part in helping communities get back to normal, and we are delighted to be able to get this emergency funding to Hitchin Rugby Club to help it get back up and

running as soon as possible".

The work will be done by Championship Sports Surfaces (CSS) who renovated Hitchin's First XV pitch in 2010 and who have been responsible for its maintenance ever since.



The festival, which is organised by CAMRA North Herts, Hitchin Round Table and Hitchin Rugby Club kicked off on Thursday 12 June, using the club's marquee and facilities.

The three day event saw 2,500 people visit, 17% more than last year.

There were 77 cask ales on offer, as well as cider and perries

North Herts CAMRA festival organiser, Jon Kirby, said: "Over 7,000 pints of ale were drunk and all the cider was sold out, Friday was absolutely packed with people in the marquee and sitting out on the benches enjoying the sun – that was our most noticeable difference. All our volunteers worked really hard to make this a great community event"

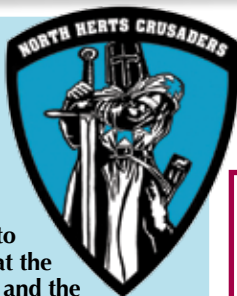


## A very successful venture

North Herts Crusaders RLFC, a local amateur rugby league club, entered into an agreement with HRFC to be based at the club during the summer, hiring a pitch and the club's facilities for both midweek training and matches.

Running two senior sides, an Under 15's and Under 18's, many HRFC players have been introduced to the new code, and are keeping really fit during the summer months

Their games have been extremely well supported on the touchline, with many new friends being made on and off the pitch, and the bar has been open, selling real ale throughout the "close season" – a first!



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## Hitchin awarded £10,000 RFU grant



Rugby has received a major boost in the area as Hitchin RFC is awarded a £10,000 Transforming Social Spaces Grant by the Rugby Football Union. The grant was given as part of the RFU's lead up and legacy initiative for the 2015 Rugby World Cup that is being staged in England and Wales.

Hitchin was chosen as a recipient of the Lead Up & Legacy Transforming Social Spaces grant after the club and its members also raised £10,000 to enhance the club's social facilities.

Richard Lucas, Hitchin Rugby's Chairman explained, "Working together we are strengthening the partnership between the RFU and our Club to be 'Fit for 15'. The grant will enhance the clubhouse's social facilities and provide a resource to be used by the local Hitchin community".

Jason Bowers of the RFU said, "Hosting the World Cup provides an opportunity to deliver a huge participation legacy for rugby union. The RFU has committed £10m investment which will create a network of over 500 Lead Up & Legacy Centres aimed at providing a platform on which club rugby participation throughout England can be built".

Peter Kelly, Chairman of the Hitchin Youth Trust commented, "The Trust has supported the work of the Mini and Youth Section of the Rugby Club for many years. This investment by the RFU is excellent news. The club has an enthusiastic group of hard-working volunteers and this combined funding will enable them to do even more for the young people of Hitchin in the future."

Richard Lucas added, "The 2015 Rugby World Cup will inspire a new wave of people of all ages to become involved in rugby and this RFU investment will help our club to be even better equipped to welcome them."

# Mini & Youth Section update

Having been a member of the club for over ten years I wanted to give something back to the Club. I've been juggling Youth fixtures for a few years – squeezing large numbers into our facilities on a Sunday morning.

I'm always impressed by all of our teams that cope every Sunday with cramped conditions. So I'm delighted that this year we've negotiated with the Priory School for extended use of their playing fields, by way of a new connecting gate. This will considerably reduce the overcrowding. Combined with the new changing rooms and improvements to the clubhouse the future is bright. As the new M&Y Chair I'd love to claim the honours for these changes, but of course the truth is it's another great effort by Team HRFC.

The M&Y section will benefit from all these changes and our 450+ membership will continue to grow as we build up to the Rugby World Cup next year.

I should introduce the other members of the committee who collectively contribute to the continued success of the M&Y section:

- **Mark Adamson, Vice Chair Youth** brings sound business sense and a voice of reason. He also sits on the Business Committee of the Club.
- **Justine Welbury, Vice Chair Minis** is the Social Secretary, Volunteer Co-ordinator, our Saracens Rep and also sits on the bar committee. Her enthusiasm is boundless.
- **Tim Bonnett** is our Safeguarding Officer and is totally committed to HRFC and the County CB.
- **Martin Prior** is our Coaching Co-ordinator responsible for Coaches' courses, development training

and the Kids First Rugby programme.

- **Martin Brace** is the Youth Fixtures Secretary. He's also looking after minis fixtures while we find another volunteer.
- **Adrian Pomfret** is the Girls Rugby Rep. Girls rugby is a key focus for the section and we're delighted to be establishing a Girls under 18 age group.
- **Andrea Miller** is the M&Y Treasurer. She'll be working with Chris Jones, the Club Treasurer to help ensure our transition to charitable status.
- **Sammie Sutton** is the new M&Y Secretary and I'm delighted to welcome her as a new committee member.
- **Richard Lucas** is a whirlwind of ideas and quests for sponsorship.



John Walsh, Mini & Youth Chair

Our photos and contact details are on the website, so if you have any queries or suggestions please get in touch. You can also follow the M&Y section on Twitter: @MYHitchinRugby and Facebook: 'Hitchin RFC Mini and Youth Section'

Finally – if, like me, you want to give something back to the club, please contact me about volunteering at MYChair@HitchinRugby.com – I'd be delighted to hear from you.

John Walsh

## Hitchin Rugby Academy

The Academy looks forward to its third season and is delivering on its aim 'to provide the best quality rugby coaching for Under 16s to Under 19s in North Hertfordshire'. The Academy looks forward to the strong U16 squad joining them next season to join an accomplished U18 Academy team and two U17 squads.

Jim Panter continues as Lead Coach ably supported by many others with a telling contribution from fitness coach, Simon Miles. There is still money in the kitty too for coaching support following the generous donations from VPs after an appeal from 'BAJC' two seasons ago.

Once again the Academy and age group squads will target league and cup success to measure progress. In addition we will attempt to improve the transition to senior rugby for all 17 year olds in an attempt to keep them in the game in later years.

Indeed, fourteen Academy players made senior debuts at Hitchin with Ruiiri Shanahan completing 21 First XV appearances. Other notable cap numbers came from Josh Stallard, Harry Chater, Erik Spiro, James Callis, Will Hurry, Robert Austin, James Sims, Jack Burgess, Peter Stanbury and, until injury, Tom Brennan and Callum Higgins. The quality of senior contribution was confirmed through Ruiiri Shanahan gaining the Most Improved Player award at the senior awards BBQ.

Harry Chater has been at Bedford Blues while Euan Dickson-Earle is retained at Saracens and has made the senior 7s squad at Sarries. The Academy also has 2 players in next season's County U18 squad – Simon Taylor and Lewis McCracken.

Tim Jeffries



Euan, called up for the Saracens Premiership 7s squad but sadly not passed fit by the Saracens' physio

## Academy win Road to Rio 7s at the end of a successful season

A successful season for the Academy was rounded off by victory in the "Road to Rio 7s" held at Ipswich RFC in May.

Our lads travelled to Ipswich taking on much bigger squads from the like of Southwold, Ipswich and Wymondham.

The triumphant team consisted of Harry Chater, Euan Dixon-Earle, Harry Cartwright, Henry Walsh, Adrian Haye, Matt Kerr, Mitch Ryan and Bailey Burton. The rugby was fast and entertaining. Hitchin's speed, tactics and fitness overcame the opposition - winning every match in the qualifying rounds.

The final with a closely contested match against the host team - with Hitchin lifting the trophy after a final score of 26:19.

Over the season the Academy team of U17s and U18s finished 3rd in their league and were also runners up in the County Plate final. The squad reached the 4th round of the National Colts Cup which is the furthest any Hitchin team has reached.

The U16s saw both squads achieve excellent league finishes in Divisions 2 and 5 and the A squad reached the County Cup final where they put in a magnificent performance. The B squad lost narrowly in their semi-final to the eventual champions.

It says much about attitude and expectations that the squad felt it was a below par season!



Hitchin under 18s win the "Road to Rio 7s" at Ipswich

# Looking back over

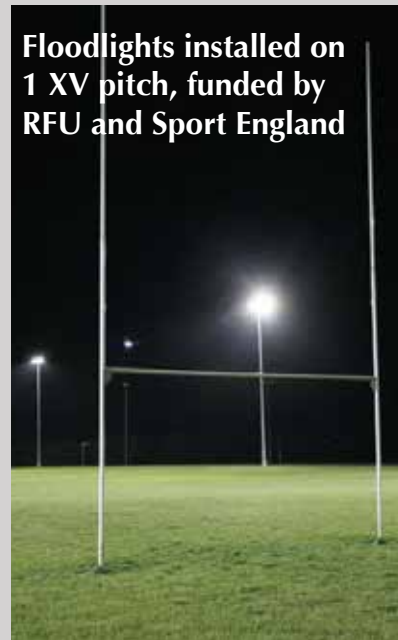
2005



## 2004/5 season Triple jump!

League Champions, winners Herts President's Trophy, and top of County Honours Table.

Floodlights installed on 1 XV pitch, funded by RFU and Sport England



200



2008



## Promotion!

2009



## Royal Anglian Regiment

2011



2012



## Sponsorship

Hitchin based retirement specialist LV= announced its official sponsorship of Hitchin Rugby Football Club (HRFC), signing a three-year deal.



## Funding

We received £40,000 of National Lottery funding to install full pitch match flood lights on the second of our three pitches.

# Over the last 10 years



**2007**

## Financial boost for club

The Club's Mini & Youth section has received a huge boost thanks to Else Refining and Recycling Ltd sponsoring the section over a five year period commencing in June 2006. This continuing sponsorship will bring the company's contribution to rugby in the community to £43,000 over a ten year period.

## Irrigation system installed for 1 XV pitch



Memorial Game



**2010**

## 1 XV pitch cultivated and laser levelled



## Accredited

Hitchin one of first clubs to receive RFU Accreditation Award

**2013**

## 25 years of Mini & Youth

John Drew reported at the 1987/88 AGM that there was a proposal to set up a mini rugby section.

A public notice in the press in September 1988 advertised the start of Mini rugby at HRFC and by November we had 50 members

For three days in June Hitchin RFC in partnership with CAMRA North Herts and



Hitchin Round Table hosted the Annual Hitchin Beer & Cider Festival for the first time. It is fair to say the whole weekend was a fantastic success.

# Hitchin M&Y players in Herts Youth Games victory

**A fantastic result for North Herts who became the Herts Youth Games under 9 tag Rugby champions on Sunday 6th July.**

Ryan Spence, the North Herts coach said: "The squad had three highly influential Hitchin M&Y players who represented their district and club fantastically well".

The team won four games and drew one to become the outright victors.

Ryan added: "Playmaker and defensive organiser Daniel Baverstock was a vocal and dominant force as he led from the front all tournament displaying confidence and determination. Adam Miles was thoroughly impressive as the year 2 student displayed a step Jason Robinson would be proud of in attack while diving for every tag in defence saving many tries. We were all delighted with our other year 2 player and younger sibling Lucy Baverstock who played every minute of every game and



**Herts Youth Games winners**

heard a roar from the crowd when she scored her first try in the final game against Stevenage".

Ryan also asked that his thanks be extended to Hitchin RFC for the use of our pitches for the squad's training, saying the kids have had a fantastic few weeks.

## Twickenham groundsman visits HRFC

**Keith Kent, together with RFU Facilities manager Jayson Bowers, and Hertfordshire RDO Melanie Lilley visited the club in June, as part of a review of pitches in the county. His report follows:**

It was an absolute delight to visit Hitchin rugby club again. The whole field is looking the best that I have ever seen it look. The pitches are the star feature of the whole park, covered in good thick growing grass.

The club need to be congratulated on the present state of the pitches. They together with a really good contractor, Steve Tingley took the bull by the horns and made such a difference. Backed now by the council and their contractors the rugby pitches at Hitchin are the pitches that I hold up as an example of everyone working together and just what can be achieved.

Chris Jones has to be singled out as the driving force in the very early days and all of his hard work and planning has come to fruition. The maintenance programme allied with the irrigation system has made such a difference. The whole club can be very proud of their pitches and what they have achieved. I was delighted to be asked to go back and see such fine pitches.

### 1st Team Pitch

This pitch is in the best condition that I have ever seen it in. And that is following the wettest winter on record!

The pitch has been scarified, top dressed with 60 tons of sand, over seeded and verti-drained. The pitch has been fertilised twice and looks very well on it.

Steve and Brian (Baines) are playing a vital role with their grass cutting. They are cutting in different directions three times every week. This has thickened up the sward and has kept the stalk grass down to a minimum.

They told me that they drag mat the pitch once per week in the winter.

Everything that needs to be done is being done and to a very high standard.

There is a little weed in the sward. The council lads who were present at our meeting, Andrew and Gareth agreed that they were to weed kill with a selective weed killer.

I will say it again; this is the best that I have ever seen this pitch.

### 2nd Team Pitch

This pitch now has lights on it and is the training pitch which gets a lot of use. The club wisely have taken this on board and are in the process of levelling out some of the depressions. They are then going to over seed and fertilise as well as verti-drain.

### 3rd Team Pitch

This pitch is being used as a rugby league pitch all summer. The rugby league play has not touched the pitch! The grass



**Keith Kent**

coverage is once again magnificent. The cutting is certainly making a difference allied with the clubs maintenance programme.

I am so proud of you all as a club. And you should all be so proud of yourselves.

**Keith Kent**

## Clubhouse development

**After long negotiations with North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) we are pleased to announce that we are about to sign off on the new 99 year lease and management agreement. This in combination with our conversion to a charity will finally allow us to embark on the redevelopment of the changing rooms.**

However, due to the time it has taken to complete all the agreements with NHDC we now intend to postpone the commencement of the works until next spring. Although this is a little disappointing we are confident that delaying the start will give us a clean run at the project without the risk of inclement weather adversely affecting construction.

Once completed, we will be equipped with modern facilities that are equal to the standard of our pitches. This is the first phase of our ambitious plan to redevelop the entire clubhouse complex and is an important milestone in our plans to provide the best amateur rugby facilities in North Hertfordshire, at the King George V facility.




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

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Tom Jeffries

## Under 20 County honours for two Hitchin lads

Two Hitchin lads who came all the way through the mini and youth section at the club played County Under 20s rugby last weekend. Tom Jeffries played for Hertfordshire and Stefan Brand for East Midlands.

Both were teammates in the Hitchin Colts team two years ago who were the Division 1 Champions.

The East Midlands team featuring Stefan are already qualified for the quarter finals. Whereas the Hertfordshire Under 20 team were very unlucky in being narrowly beaten by Kent despite dominating the game.

This meant Stefan and Tom's hopes of playing against each other in the knock out rounds on the way to the Twickenham final were not to be.



Stefan Brand

# 1 XV 2014/15 season

After a challenging 2013/14 season (on the field) we are delighted that our 1XV will remain in London 3 NW. Although our position at this level was maintained due to the demise (off the field) of two London based clubs our position for the 2014/15 season reflects the focus and talent that we have available at the club.

After a transition year we are now well set to perform and ensure that our status is cemented, and improved, with the wider RFU league re-structure coming into effect at the end of this season. We wish James Bolter, 1 XV Captain and Adam Shaw, Head coach, and all their support staff and players the very best for the season ahead, good luck lads!

Our opponents will be:

- Belsize Park RFC
- Datchworth RFC
- Finchley RFC
- Fullerians RFC
- Grasshoppers RFC
- Hackney RFC
- Old Streetonians RFC
- Stevenage Town RFC
- U.C.S. Old Boys RFC
- Wasps FC
- Welwyn RFC

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9th August saw a great day of rugby and fund raising for Help4heroes, organised by our own Joe Benucci. A full report and pictures will be published in our next issue of *Club points*.



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# End of Season Awards

This year the event was held in July with a BBQ in the summer sunshine!

Well attended, and thanks again to Debbie Jeffries for the organisation. Other awards made on the night included:

- **Wally Hazard Trophy, 1st XV Player of the Season**  
Ian Thomson
- **Tony Else Trophy, Most Improved Player**  
Ruari Shanahan
- **President's Salver**  
Peter Tasko



At the End of Season Awards ceremony, the President's Award for Team of the Season went to the Hedgehogs!

## AGM: election of 2014-15 Club Officers

At the AGM held on Tuesday 27 May 2014, the following people were elected to next season's Management Committee:

- **President:** Tim Jeffries
- **Chair:** Richard Lucas
- **Vice Chair and Chair of Business Committee:** Peter Tasko
- **Club Secretary:** Michael Emmerson
- **Treasurer:** Chris Jones
- **Club Captain and 1XV Captain:** James Bolter
- **Chair of the Playing Committee:** Steve Ward
- **Chair of Women's Rugby:** Natalie Mellowship
- **Chair of Mini and Youth:** John Walsh

## VP's corner

**Hello again, and welcome to the latest gripping article for "VPs' Corner"**

Firstly, I would like to thank you all for your support last season. My job would be impossible without you. And on that note, a huge THANK YOU for your wonderful response to the appeal for (yet more) funds towards the refurbishment of our clubhouse. Together we helped to raise the £10k needed to get match funding, and you will see the rewards when we have our first lunch in September when you will be able to use our new chairs and tables in the newly decorated bar area.

Also welcome to our new Vice Presidents. Spencer Meadows Rob Vivian, Philip Dickson-Earle, John Sanderson, Robert Hanlon, Jules

## 2015 RBS Six Nations fixtures



**Friday, 6 February**  
Wales v England 8.05pm

**Saturday, 14 February**  
England v Italy 2.30pm

**Sunday, 1 March**  
Ireland v England 3pm

**Saturday, 14 March**  
England v Scotland 5pm

**Saturday, 21 March**  
England v France 5pm

Tickets application forms will be sent to members by email.

Tickets for away games are only available from RFU in very small quantities.

If you do not have access to email, see: Chris Jones, 69 Bearton Green, Hitchin SG5 1UG

Emmerson, Andrew Hardy, Andy Stonehouse, Alan Shanahan, Gina Shanahan, and Steve Allison, have all joined us. I am sure that I speak for everyone in congratulating you, and saying that we look forward to seeing you at our lunches.

Speaking of which, the dates for this season are: Sat 20 Sept 2014 – 1st XV v Stevenage RFC; Sat 15 Nov 2014 – 1st XV v Belsize Park RFC; Sat 21 Feb 2015 – 1st XV v Finchley RFC and Sat 11 Apr 2015 – 1st XV v Fullarians RFC.

We will keep the ticket price at £25 once again – exceptionally good



Martin Howard

## RFU Grand Draw 2014

**The results are in!**

We'd like to thank everyone who took part in this year's Grand Draw – for every £1 ticket you purchased, the club development fund benefited by 90 pence. Unfortunately no one from Hitchin RFC won a prize this time – better luck next year!

- £10,000 (RFU)
- P Whitby – Drifters RFC
- Palmer Sport driving experience (BMW UK)
- L Grieves – St Ambrose College
- £1000 (Robinson Low Francis)
- C Oldroyd – Crossley Heath School
- £1,000 (Mazars)
- J G Cox – Banbury RFC
- Signed British & Irish Lions 2013 Shirt (HSBC)
- B Fitzgerald – Chess Valley RFC
- Weekend Break for 2 for RBS 6 Nations match 2015 England v Scotland (including accommodation and guaranteed match tickets)
- J Anderson – Richmond FC
- Signed England RBS 6 Nations 2013/4 Shirt (RFU)
- P Heasman – Newcastle Ravens RFC
- iPad 16GB WiFi (Forsters)
- K Milton – Blandford RFC
- Hospitality Package for 2 at a QBE International Match 2014 – England v Fiji (Twickenham Experience/RFU)
- H Dow – Sevenoaks RFC
- Hospitality Package for 2 at a QBE International Match 2014 – England v Fiji (Twickenham Experience/RFU)
- R Datson – Trojans Juniors RFC
- Hospitality Package for 2 at a QBE International Match 2014 – England v Fiji (Twickenham Experience/RFU)
- J Winspear – Edwardian RFC

value I hear you say? I will be sending out the invitations in due course, and please do not apply until then. I am a "bear of little brain" and do not remember when people ask for a place when I'm watching a match, or haven't yet got my highly sophisticated system set up. As usual, VPs will get priority for places, but I am sure there will be

space for some guests at each function.

If I don't see you at the lunches I am sure that our paths will cross somewhere on the field, and I am always open to helpful suggestions.