

Merry Christmas and happy new year to all our readers!

Club points



News for Hitchin Rugby Football Club members

Issue 33 • December 2015

Open for business

Hitchin Rugby Club opened its new £½ million changing room complex on Sunday.

Lady Valerie Dixon of the Valiant Trust officially opened Hitchin Rugby Club's new £½ million changing room complex on Sunday. NHDC Councillor Jane Gray (Executive Member for Leisure) was also present to lend her support to the club, together with representatives from the RFU and Hertfordshire RFU.

The opening marks a significant milestone for the club as it's the completion of the first stage of a £1.2 million four-phase project to completely redevelop the site. This first phase was built with the financial support from the club's own development fund, Sport England, the RFU and the Valiant Trust.

The new changing rooms will directly benefit all of the club's playing membership: children, youth, ladies and men. But the greatest beneficiaries will be the Mini & Youth section of the club – with nearly 580 children playing rugby, Hitchin is the largest sports group in North Hertfordshire and accommodating all of them every Sunday was proving to be a major block to the club's commitment to providing rugby to the youth of the local community.



Lady Valerie Dixon cuts the ribbon to officially open the new changing room complex

With the added demand that this year's Rugby World Cup is likely to bring, the new changing rooms will significantly ease the pressure on providing changing facilities for all sections of the club.

The changing rooms, built by Linxcroft Construction Ltd, will not only provide excellent facilities for the club, but will become a fund-raiser for the club. Significant investment has been made in solar panelling and other 'green' innovations. The excess power from the panels will provide an additional source of income for the club and the capture and recycling of rain water from the large roof area will help provide the club's water needs for irrigating their pitches.

The club's President Tim Jeffries said, "We want to move onto our second phase building



The new changing rooms are ready to use

as soon as we can. We now have a 99-year lease and we're determined to have facilities in the centre of Hitchin that reflect the increasing popularity of rugby and the rugby club's place in our community".

He also thanked three dedicated volunteers who have spearheaded the project – Peter Tasko, Chair of the Business Committee, Chris Jones, Club Treasurer and Iain Charnley, the club's project co-ordinator. The President added, "Great financial support and dedicated and hard-working volunteers is building this club into something that the whole town can be proud of".



President in Ladies VIP changing room



Queue to view

Clubhouse and changing room redevelopment

PHASE 2

Much to the surprise of a few naysayers, but for all to see, we have successfully raised (and spent) £475,000 or completing Phase 1 of our ambitious clubhouse and changing room redevelopment programme.

The six changing rooms constructed at the far end of the pavilion are now in use and provide us with an excellent facility and a great springboard for the next step of our plans. Iain Charnley, Chris Jones and I have taken a short breather to recover from the project but now wish to move on to Phase 2.

Phase 2 will involve the construction of a further four changing rooms, ancillary rooms to support the functions of the club both on and off the pitch and a new function room to replace the pavilion hall. The function room will provide a multiuse space to cater for private lets, training courses and larger club dinners; it will be both a source of income and

a vast improvement to club space and facilities.

To start construction, our Club needs your support. We are to at least match the funding of Phase 1 and will succeed in this by a combination of grant applications (when they become available), considerable fundraising on our own behalf and by attracting sponsorship and donations, be they corporate or individual. Our goal is for each of us to help either through sponsorship or by undertaking fundraising activities to start rebuilding the development fund.

Miranda and I started the fundraising ball rolling this autumn by raising £6,000 towards the development fund (see below) and we believe that many of you will be prepared develop other fundraising programmes and opportunities to rapidly grow the fund. We appreciate that this is an ambitious

goal, but we have done this once and know we can do it again.

If you have any concepts or ideas relating to fundraising, wish to help or can bring a sponsor or donor to the table, either contact Mark Adamson, Chris Jones, Richard Lucas or me or ask any head coach or committee member to bring your proposals or suggestion to the Business Committee.

This is an exciting time for the club and we wish to maintain our momentum so that we can embark on the next phase of club redevelopment as rapidly as possible.

Peter Tasko, Vice Chair and Chair of the business Committee

Pete and Miranda's autumn stroll

The things we say in a bar, or at an oyster festival after a cider or two can come back to haunt us. In October 2014, sitting at the fabulous oyster festival in Falmouth, I suggested to Miranda that we could take an extended autumn holiday the following year walk from Hitchin to the Oyster Festival in Falmouth.



Pete and Miranda ready for an adventure

Twelve months later, after many practice walks, lots of blisters and sore feet we duly arrived back in Falmouth. We were greeted by the Mayor, members of the Falmouth Marine Band and the infamous Betty Stogs (look it up). We processed along the high street to the Kings Pipe where we ended our adventure with a dozen oysters and a glass of cider.

The Autumn Stroll had taken us 19½ days, two of which we rested. We had climbed 33,223 feet and descended 33,444 (I assume it's closer to the water than Hitchin), we had walked for a total of 114 hours and 55 minutes at an average speed of 2.9mph and covered 337 miles. But more importantly we had raised £6,766 for the Lymphoma association and £6,097 towards Phase 2 of our clubhouse redevelopment.

During the walk we encountered many wonderful and interesting people; saw beautiful countryside and wildlife (you've got to love those bullocks) and came



Betty Stogs, members of the Falmouth Marine Band and the Mayor welcomed Pete and Miranda

across both amazing and infuriating parts of the country (who doesn't like a footbath blocked with barbed wire or the odd horsebox). It was a real adventure and we saw and did far more than can be covered here. It was a great trip and we are delighted to have helped to raise funds for two such good causes.

A copy of our "blog" is available if you would like to know more.

Peter and Miranda Tasko



They made it in good spirit

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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



1 XV v. Grasshoppers RFC

GAME TIME

Our ability to get out more than two or three adult sides at the start of the season was affected by the RWC. However, numbers have improved and we are getting four sides out most weeks. The 1XV after a difficult start are improving week by week and should finish mid table by the time the second half of the season comes around.

At the start of the 2015/16 season the Ladies team found themselves with seven players. They now have 25!

This has come from recruiting via stalls in the town square and at Hitchin FitFest and attending events such as the Hitchin beer festival and advertising with *The Comet*.

They have a high number of players who have never played rugby until this year, however they have been fully involved and we have won three out of our five games so far. Two of these games were in the RFU Junior Ladies Cup in which they won the first match and narrowly lost (by three points) to a team two leagues above us. They are now in the plate competition, and looking forward to a really promising season.



Sean McGinnity on the charge v. Finchley RFC in league win, supported by skipper James Bolter and Nick Panton

Meanwhile the Mini & Youth numbers continue to grow, approaching the magical 600. This brings it problems in finding enough grass! Thank goodness for our arrangements with our neighbours, the Priory School.

HFRC Fun Club

The Fun Club will be open Saturday afternoons in the Pavilion when the 1st XV is playing at home. It is available for all teams playing at home on those dates. It will open one hour before kick-off and close four hours later.

Children between 1 to 8 years old are welcome and one of the conditions is that the parent (or Guardian) is on the premises at all times. For the purposes of the Fun Club the field is part of the premises.

The Fun Club will be run by suitably qualified and experienced staff and volunteers, all of who will have the advanced DBS clearance.

The aim is to allow parents and carers to play when looking after their child or children would otherwise make this difficult, if not impossible.

At the moment we have a small selection of toys and games only, but

we hope this will expand through donations from members.

The cost at present will be a donation of £1 per hour or part thereof.

Squash and biscuits will be provided, but if you would prefer something else please send it with your child in a clearly named container.

If your child uses nappies please send spares and changing equipment as appropriate.

Pre-booking is essential so that we can ensure appropriate numbers of staff. Places need to be booked by the Wednesday before your match at the latest by emailing Martin Howard at martin@markate.co.uk.



FUN CLUB DATES

- 9th January
- 23rd January
- 13th February
- 5th March
- 2nd April
- 23rd April

VP's corner

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

Firstly, I would again like to thank you all for your support last season. My job would be impossible without your help.

Also, welcome to our new Vice President Iain Charnley – recognition of his contribution to the successful completion of the new changing rooms

I am sure that I speak for everyone in congratulating Iain and saying that we look forward to seeing him at our lunches.



Iain Charnley

The dates for this season are: Saturday 5th December, 13th February and 23 April. We will keep the ticket price at £25 once again – exceptionally good 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.

At the last lunch, in October, Phil Jones announced that the first ever award for the Vice President of the Year is Tom Bartiromo. It will be presented at the December lunch. Phil wanted to commemorate his father with this annual award which is to be given to the VP who, in the opinion of a small and very select Committee, has gone “above and beyond” in serving the Club – I wonder who may in contention for next year?

We have been asked to provide some regular assistance on Saturday afternoons, helping with things like welcoming visiting teams and referees, and ensuring that the spectator ropes are put out before the match. I will be sending out a list of things soon and ask for your help. If everyone agreed to do just one Saturday then we would only have to do it once in every two or three years – not exactly onerous, but really good for the Club image and smooth running of the afternoon – watch this space, as they say...

If I don't see you at the lunches I am sure that our paths will cross somewhere on the field, and I always appreciate helpful suggestions. Have a good season.

Martin Howard



Martin Howard



Tom Bartiromo

PLEA FROM OUR TREASURER
Please make all cheques for donations, dinners, internationals tickets etc payable to **HITCHIN RUGBY LTD,** the charity's new bank account.

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OBITUARIES

Gerald Cherry & Bill Boyd

Within the space of a few weeks the Club has lost two of its stalwart members. Gerald Cherry always a forward, and Bill Boyd almost always a back.

Gerald was a founder member and Bill thereabouts (see the Club history).

Both had played their initial years for the Club and to some extent moved on. Both returned on active service in the mid 60s in the Club's hour of need. It was in some difficulty. Whilst serving this common purpose Gerald and Bill had little else in common other than they both went to the Boys School.

GERALD CHERRY

Gerald's working life was spent with his brother and father in their hardware and lorry business in Nightingale Road. A hands on man – he never owned pen or paper – he was well known for his grasp of basic Anglo Saxon language and had very strong standards in life.

Never first to the bar Gerald was totally to the fore when in support of the Club's social activity or when a lorry or physical activity was called for. Being principally a player, although Chairman 1980 - 83, Gerald in later years had special recall of all the members that he played or had a pint with. The Club was very special to him.

BILL BOYD

Almost a complete contrast was Bill. Always a Scot, dare we forget it, he was known at the Boys School as a highly talented sportsman. He excelled at everything, particularly if he had his mind on it.

There is no doubt that Bill could be distracted by other activity. He once, on School Sports Day, told a master he would not take another long jump, with the School Record well within his grasp, because he was in the High Jump later.

Bill was a long time in Barclays employment, as were a number of members at the time. His move to Welwyn Garden City meant we saw less of him but his golf improved.

All of us who enjoyed playing and having a pint with Bill and Gerald will carry these memories with us to the final whistle.

Thank God for Sports Clubs.

Our condolences to family and close friends

B.A.J. (Brian) Chapman

BACK TO

SCHOOL-IVAL

Back 2 Schoolival, a Hitchin RFC based event run by 2nd team skipper Adam Howard, was recognised for their June 6th 2015 event by the RFU on 5th September before the World Cup warm up game between England and Ireland.

Back 2 Schoolival offered the chance for ex-pupils of the local schools to reunite to form a rugby team to take part in a charity festival.

Schools taking part included Hitchin Boys School, the Priory, Knights Templar and John Henry Newman to name a few and 180 players took part on the day. The day raised £1,200 for charity, including £1,000 for Hitchin based charity the North Herts Sanctuary who provide temporary housing to those in need.

In recognition of this, Back 2 Schoolival was awarded the RFU Young Rugby Ambassador Best Event of the Year 2015.

Event organiser Adam Howard travelled to Twickenham to receive the award, with England Women World Cup Winners Sarah Hunter and La Toya Mason present to meet the winners.

Recognition from the RFU for the event means a lot to those behind Back 2 Schoolival and has spurred them on to increase their efforts for 2016. Back 2 Schoolival will return to King George playing fields in Hitchin on Saturday 9th July, when the Old Boys tournament will return



Adam Howard shows off trophy to England Women world cup winners

**Best
Event
of the
Year**

and be accompanied by a women's 10s tournament.

Back 2 Schoolival will replicate this format at Old Albanians on Saturday 20th August, and will also host an event on Saturday 4th June in Baldock which will take the Back 2 Schoolival ethos into the realms of football, netball and rounder's.



RFU

**YOUNG RUGBY
AMBASSADOR
England
2015**

The 100 Club has now closed

This fund raising venture was set up many years ago, and has provided £500 to £700 per annum to the club's bank account

Our thanks to Deon and Lorraine Marevich for keeping it ticking over for the past few years, but following their recent move to New Zealand, no one has come forward to take over.

So, with few new members joining, and some now moved away and out of touch, the decision has been reached to wind up the club.

In accordance with the 100 Club's rules, any cash in the bank will be transferred to the main club account.

The last draw took place at the VP's lunch on 5th December, with £500 paid out to the lucky winners Peter

Oates, Doug Mitchell, Peter, Miranda and Joan Tasko.

Approximately £1,500 will find its way into the Development Fund. Existing standing orders should be cancelled, but if not will be refused as the bank account is now closed. However, fund raising for Phase 2 of the club's development plan will start in 2016, so watch this space!



Bumper Beer Festival

A record breaking 2,786 guests flocked to the festival at the Club on King George's playing fields on Thursday 11th to Saturday 13th June 2015.

The pleasant weather on Friday evening brought with it a record crowd (over 10% more than 2014!), and while the weather was rather more inclement on Saturday, it failed to dampen the mood or slow the steady stream of guests through the door, and by 7pm the festival had officially sold out of beer after three amazing days.

This annual local event is organised by volunteers from the North Herts Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA), Hitchin Round Table and Hitchin Rugby Football Club and wouldn't be possible without the help and support of these individuals and the event sponsors.



Hitchin RFC Burghers

NEXT YEAR'S FESTIVAL DATES: 9TH - 11TH JUNE 2016





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SAVE THE DATE!

SPONSORS' DINNER

Wednesday 9th March 2016

Guest speakers to include Wasps and England's Jeff Probyn, and comedian Jed Stone

Invitations to club members will come out in the new year



Don't forget our website!
www.hitchinrugby.com