

Club points



News for Hitchin Rugby Club members

Issue 36 • August 2017



Nick Panton on charge in win against Staines RFC

Captains Report 2016/17

This season has been a mixed one for the **1XV**, with our league being incredibly tight from 5th position down to 11th. Eventually we finished in 8th position securing our place in London 3 North West for next season, but with a couple of more wins we could have finished in the top half of the table. The squad managed to reach the regional semi-final of the RFU Senior Vase, unfortunately losing out to the winners of the entire competition, Farnham RFC. We also reached the semi-final of the Herts Presidents Tankard and we were unfortunate to lose to Welwyn in extra time of this match as well.

The **2XV** finished their league in 5th position but were only four league points away from second. They were unlucky to lose out in their cup final, narrowly losing to Weston. James Akrill has been a superb and committed captain to

them and this was rewarded by the **2XV** winning the Team of the Season Trophy.

The **3XV** finished 6th in their league and did struggle to get consistent teams together. But midway through the season Tim Rainey came on board as captain which gave a massive improvement to their playing numbers and results. The **3XV** ended up winning their cup final under Tim's leadership.

The club has managed to get a Vets XV out twice this season and they managed to win both fixtures. Herts RFU are introducing a Friday night Vets competition next season, of which we are hosting two evenings of fixtures.



James Akrill

MNP become new lead sponsor

Following our involvement last year as platinum and tag festival sponsor we are delighted to step up to lead sponsor over the next five years.

Although we design buildings all over the UK and abroad, our roots are local with a Hitchin HQ and many of us living in the town where our children participate in many different sports. But rugby is our passion. MNP's Managing Director, Stu Pledge played from the age of seven and now coaches his son in the U9's. With boots that have been hung up many times, he now plays in the senior touch league but has threatened to run out in the Vets!

So as a business filled with rugby supporters, coaches and parents, it was a natural decision to support such a great family and community club. Over the next five years we are committed to supporting the club financially and with evolving redevelopment plans we will continue to assist where we can with the building design.

We are just getting to know many of you in the club and hope we can get to know many more either on the touchline on Saturday supporting our senior teams or on a Sunday morning coaching our up and coming talent.

Good luck to all our players this season, from all at Mason Navarro Pledge.



Stu Pledge and son



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www.mnp.co.uk



Don't forget our website!

www.hitchinrugby.com

A tribute to
Dr Adrian Haigh
– see page 2

Dr Adrian Haigh

12.06.1925 – 29.06.2017

One of the considerable comforts always forthcoming from Doc Haigh was the knowledge that he would always be there. Ready to supply encouragement, support or guidance to members.

It was therefore extremely sad for the membership to learn that he is no longer with us.

In its formative years, the Club was fortunate to have "Doc" as a founder playing member. He was one of the original group that met in the Red Hart Hotel to help form the club, amongst the others being Gerald Cherry and George Chance, both of whom, sadly, have left us in recent years

He succeeded Maurice Olden (Headmaster of the Boys School and Club President 1954-1967) as Club President serving from 1967-1983. He not only helped the Club get under way, and build the Clubhouse, he was on hand to help steady the ship when fortunes dipped in the 1960s and it was necessary to rebuild both its playing and social strengths.

The Club could not have been more worthily represented throughout Hitchin than by Doc through his practice. Also via Doc and his wife Sanda, with their involvement with the town's businesses, societies, various Governorships, the Council and the community at large.

Our condolences to Joanna, Andrew, Amanda, Sarah and the wider family.

• A memorial service will be held in Hitchin, probably in October, details to be announced by the family.



Budge Rogers (Bedford, England & B Lions) accepts bronze hedgehog from Doc Haigh in 1975

"In remembering dear Doctor Haigh, the Club had no greater member more affectionately held at any time. He had the distinction of probably being better known than any other Hitchin member at any time. Doc was both a gentleman, a sportsman and a Doctor together, he was quite special. We were all particularly fortunate to be in his field."

B.A.J. (Brian) Chapman

"Could not let news of Doc's death pass without comment. Apart from being a founding member, he was the person who stuck by the club when almost everyone else opted to leave. His enthusiasm for his club and the game were a vital part of the club's survival."

"I don't remember his playing days. In my time he was always on the touch line, yelling encouragement and taking care of any medical situations that the 'magic sponge' couldn't handle. I shall toast Doc's memory tonight with a quality scotch (his tippie of choice)."

Bob Watkin (USA)

VP'S CORNER

Another season...

Well, am I really starting my fifth season in this role?

A huge "thank you" not only for putting up with me, but for all the support you have given to me over the years.

This season's VP lunch dates are:

- 30th September – Kilburn Cosmos
- 25th November – Welwyn
- 17th February – St Albans
- 14th April – Finchley

Please put these dates in your diary, but please do not try to book your place until you get the invitation from me around four weeks in advance of the lunch because I will not accept it on the basis that it would not be fair on others who have waited.

The final lunch of last season was over-subscribed – I'm not sure why but it may have been that you wanted to make sure that Mr. Jeffries actually did stand down – so please book quickly when you get the notice and remember to tell me of any particular dietary requirements.

It is also time to send your nomination for the Vice President of the Year Award to me. The Hwyl Jones trophy is given annually to the VP who, in the eyes of his or her peers is deemed to have "gone above and beyond" to help our Club keep running during the season.

Please send your nomination to me either by email

(martin@markate.co.uk), text (07944 574 604)

or a note left behind or sent to the Bar. The Award will be presented at the first lunch of the season.

I look forward to seeing you all in September!

Martin Howard



Annual General Meeting

The AGM was held on Tuesday 30 May.

With Tim Jeffries stepping down after five fruitful years, Gerallt Morgan was unanimously elected as the Club's President.

Gerallt is a Life Member of the club, joining in 1980, and has been continually involved as a player and administrator, but perhaps best known in recent years for his management of the club bar – the club's best asset!

Others elected included:

- Club Chairman – Richard Lucas
- Business Chairman – Peter Tasko
- Club Captain – James Bolter
- Secretary – Michael Emmerson
- Treasurer – Chris Jones
- Ladies Chair – Lucy Kennedy
- M&Y Chair – Christophe Lavalie



The club is in safe hands with Gerallt Morgan



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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



County Tag Rugby Festival success

The M&Y Section of the club organised the County Tag Rugby Festival for the first time in 10 years on 21st and 22nd April 2017. The festival was a brilliant success by all measures.

Our guests complimented us on a great organisation and we made a sound profit to help run the section next season. We partnered with the Priory school for space and resources.

We hosted 21 clubs, 914 U7 and U8 players, nearly 2,000 visitors over the week-end from 9am to 2pm each day. The weather was just about right with sunny spells which contributed to everyone enjoying themselves.

The feedback we got from the clubs was incredible with many saying it was the best festival they had been to. Our generous sponsors helped make the day

fantastic and gave us the confidence to invest for success.

A core team organised the event and whilst it felt daunting at the beginning, it was a frantic affair in the last few days and hours before the festival. But the dedication and organisation of the festival committee ensured a very smooth show.

We sold nearly 1,500 burgers, bacon rolls, hotdogs, numerous cakes, sweets, cans of pop and supplied a continuous stream of punters to the bar.

So a massive thank you to the festival organising committee: Stuart Pledge (and his immense efforts in recruiting sponsors); Jon Lovick for a playing schedule tuned to the second; Sue Stanbury, Steve and Zoe Davies for sublime catering organisation; Angela

Gregory who liaised with all the clubs; Mark Scott and Geraint Edwards for running the car park seamlessly supported by a handful of Priory's sixth formers, Paul Watson for running the team of pitch marshals, Lindsey Pledge for working tirelessly in designing the programme and the sponsors ads; Paul Cacchioli for counting all the beans and all the 100 volunteers (including coaches, parents and siblings) who helped us on the day.

The money we raised will help us run the season 2017/18 and we're already planning the next festival of Rugby (Minis) at Hitchin in March 2018.

**Christophe Lavalie
M&Y Chairman and
Chair of the festival committee**

Women's update

Hitchin women's team finished the 2016/17 season 3rd in the league (having moved up from a merit league). There were 37 players capped throughout the season, ten of them being new to the team.



There was also a good representation in the county squad with five Hitchin players being capped. The team went on to win 'Team of the Year' at *The Comet Sports Awards*. A successful season was celebrated on tour at the Magaluf beach tournament where the Hitchin Women's team won the plate.

Over the summer the women's team have been running our second annual free boot camp – eight sessions over two months totally free to local women to promote health and fitness in the local

community. Rugby training has recently started and we have seen several new players join the squad already. The team plan to do another naked calendar this year with a percentage of the funds raised going to GB Wheelchair Rugby – the organising team are currently looking for sponsors for the calendar and our new kit.

For the 2017/18 season we will be playing in NC South East North 2, the first game of the season is on the 17th September at home against Hampstead II.



The Comet Sports Award Team of the Year – Hitchin Ladies Rugby Team

LV= U 18's cup final



The fifth LV= Under 18's finals were hosted again by Hitchin, at Old Hale Way.

With clubs entering from East Anglia, the Home Counties and London, Bishop's Stortford triumphed over Bury St Edmunds in the final of the plate competition, played on Sunday 30th April 2017.

The main cup final was delayed until Sunday 13th May 2017 with Woodbridge emerging deserved winners by 22-15 after an enjoyable and hard fought match against Hertford.

This popular U18's competition will continue under new sponsorship.

Our thanks to LV= for their generous and valuable sponsorship for the past five years, during which time the club has gone from strength to strength.

BACK 2 SCHOOL-IVAL 2017

Back2Schoolival has become a regular Hitchin fixture and this year was no different.

Although the tournament this year didn't feature as many teams as we are used to, the quality of rugby more than made up for this.

With players from Hitchin, Letchworth, Stevenage and Cantabs making up the teams, a Barbarian style of rugby was on show alongside some monster hits. Eventual winner were Harlington this year, spearheaded by three Hitchin youth players who now ply their trade elsewhere but are always a welcome return to the club.

Special thanks have to go to Ger and Babs Morgan for all their hard work on the day, Chris Jones and Brian Baines for making sure the pitches were marked out



The victorious Harlington who won this year's event

and in top condition and Martin Howard for working tirelessly all day.

Watch this space for details about next year's event!

End of season dinner



This year's senior EOS dinner was organised by the ubiquitous Claire Crompton, and was a great success with some 140 in attendance.

Awards presented included:

- **Team of the Season**
(President's Trophy)
Men's 2nd XV
- **1st XV Player of the Season**
(Wally Hazard Trophy)
James Bolter
- **Most Improved Player**
(Tony Else Trophy)
Matt Houlden
- **President's Silver Salver**
Becky Bolter
- **Women's Players' Player of the Season**
Megan Nash
- **Women's Most Improved Player**
Rebecca Little

Reflections on a successful festival

There is no doubt that the Hitchin Beer Festival, which took place in June, organised by CAMRA, Hitchin Round Table and HRFC, was an overall success by whatever criteria you set.

In terms of numbers the headlines were:

- **3,400 customers attended the festival (up on 2,874 in 2016) – some from as far afield as Sussex and Kent!**
- **Bar sales were up 24% on the Friday and up 40% on the Saturday**
- **Revenue this year was 37% up on last year, the costs were also higher, the festival made a profit.**



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A massive thank you to everyone who helped sell the Grand Draw raffle tickets and to the supporters of the club who bought them.

More club sponsorship needed!

Please contact Becky Bolter or Gerallt Morgan if you would like to sponsor Hitchin Rugby Club and help us fundraise for the 2017-18 season.
Email: Sponsorship@hitchinrugby.com