

# Club points



News for Hitchin Rugby Club members

Issue 39 • September 2019

## We're moving up!

### FROM PETER TASKO, CLUB CHAIR

**The Men's 1XV played a great season of rugby to reverse last year's relegation, returning to London 3 North West as league champions and making two cup finals.**

The first was the regional final against the eventual junior cup winners, Reeds Weybridge. And their second final was in the county President's Trophy closely losing to St Albans in the dying minutes of the game, narrowly missing out on a repeat of the promotion and cup double of the 2004/5, Men's 1XV.

The team played some excellent rugby and showed great strength or character winning several games after initially trailing to strong opposition. I was fortunate enough to watch many of their games this season and feel very proud of Tom Tidey and the squad for their commitment throughout the season. It is also I feel with no little regret that Tom has decided not to stay on as Captain for the new season.



The Men's 1XV celebrate their promotion



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### FROM CLAIRE CROMPTON, LADIES CHAIR

**This year has been the most successful year in the history of Hitchin ladies.**

We finished the season with promotion and undefeated. In addition to this, we have reached more than 50 active members which will allow us to enter a second team into the RFU merit league for the first time. As such, training attendance continues to be strong with numbers never dipping below 20.

Our new head coach Nat Mabbett is settling well and driving us forward through a successful pre-season and alongside Clive Cramphorn, James Donovan and Adam Howard, the new coaching team is receiving wonderful feedback and excellent commitment from the squad this summer.

Going forward, we aim to continue the first team's success in the new National Championship 1 level while developing our new second team. Recruitment will remain our primary focus to ensure new members can develop the section further. We're optimistic that we can make the next season as enjoyable and successful as the last one.



The undefeated Ladies



# Rugby report 2018/19

**This past season, in addition to the success of both our men's and women's 1XVs, we have seen exceptional performances from each section of our club.**

The mini's have maintained numbers and have enjoyed successes in all age groups. We can also take pride in the fact that our club is widely acknowledged as one of the best mini and youth sections in the county and indeed region.

Performances from the youth teams have been equally impressive with the **U18's** most memorable of this year's teams, ending runners up in Division 1 of the Saracens Herts Middlesex League and reaching the County Cup final.

The **Men's 2XV** also completed a strong season, winning 13 of their 27 games and reaching their merit table final; we do however continue to struggle to maintain lower sides with the 3XV playing only 14 fixtures and the vets a single game.

At the start of 2018/19 season the **3XV** had two key priorities:

1. To fulfil all fixtures (as the lower side in the club this can sometimes be a challenge)
2. To offer a route for youth players to have a taste of senior rugby, in a



**U18 Herts Cup Final Runners Up**

friendly environment, to help them transition into adult rugby and fulfil their potential.

We are pleased to confirm that we pretty much nailed both of these, we were unable to fulfil just one fixture all season. Critically we had a significant number of U17s and u18s play their first senior game.

With the majority of clubs around us struggling to put out two sides regularly we continue to buck the trend at Hitchin, and look forward to a strong 2019/20 season.

**Touch rugby** has grown in popularity and remains an area for growth.

However, with the RFU emphasis being placed on the delivery and sustainability of the 15-a-side game, we as a club will need to look for innovative ways to grow participation in this area next season.

One very exciting initiative for the club is the resurgent **academy**. Richard Lucas, Andy Dudley and their team are making tremendous progress in building a thriving academy structure and are working with the community to help the players with their development both on and off the pitch.

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## County Festival 2019

**We hosted our third M&Y Festival (U7, U8) on 27-28 April and saw 800 tag players joining us on a great weekend of rugby. A big thank you to all who volunteered and organised a fantastic event yet again.**

Coming from all over the county, 21 clubs, 100+ teams delivered resounding rugby performances over both mornings.

Our guests' comments were extremely positive and we were so lucky with the weather once again even if it was more clement on the second day.

Coaches and players had a smile on their faces at the end of the two days and definitely had a good time. A fond picture in my mind is an U8 team of eight and two coaches having a picnic just in front of the catering tent at 12.30, all with a burger in hand... brilliant!

A particular bundle of thanks has to go to Jon Lovick (Master match scheduler and pitch marker), Stuart Pledge (Wizard of sponsorship and programme editor), Lindsey Pledge (Programme magician), Paul Watson (Lord of the marshals), Manjit Moore ('Beans' counter and profit producer), Birant and Jo Osman (Catering Directors).

A special thank you to all our sponsors for the festival, your continuous support is highly appreciated: Consilium, Aluminium Warehouse, CVD, MNP, Morgan Sindall, Ashley's, Holitas, ACI Inns, Rotary.

**Christophe Lavalie**



## VP'S CORNER

**Well, the new season is just around the corner so it must be time to dust off the "Number 1s" and polish the shoes for the ever popular lunches.**

The dates this year are 26 October; 14 December; 22 February and 18 April – but please wait until I send out the invitations before trying to reserve places!

Nominations for Vice President of the Year are in – who will it be this year? All will be revealed on 26 October so book early to make sure that you are there... because you never know!

Thank you again for all the help and support you give to our club, it wouldn't be the same without you!

Great news, that Lady Valerie Dixon is joining the list of Life Members. The club has enjoyed the support of the late Sir Ian Dixon and Lady Valerie for many years.

The current and former Presidents' proposal (seconded by the Management Committee) was ratified unanimously at the Annual General Meeting.

Meanwhile, let's hope that our 1XV can replicate last year's success, and that the home nations can do the same in the Rugby World Cup. I might see some of you at the club for the televised matches.

As ever, I look forward to seeing you all again and remember – **keep smiling!**

Martin Howard



## RUGBY SHORTS

### New M&Y Chair

Birant Osman takes over as M&Y chair from Christophe Lavalie

### Open Recruitment Day

15 September 2019 is our official Open Recruitment Day 10:00-13:00. With the Rugby World Cup starting in late September there will be a high level of interest and excitement for the games. So bring friends and family to visit the club and give rugby a try!"

### Ladies committee

We have 3 alterations to the ladies committee; voted in at our AGM on 23/4. Claire Crompton will take over as Chairwoman, with Cara Wakerlin-Lavelle coming in to organise socials and Casey Burgess taking on Fixtures

### What goes on tour...

The ladies made the final of the shield during their tour to the Majorca 5s at the beginning of May. No other information has been forthcoming!

# Life Member: John Drew

**Last season we introduced two new Life Members. In this article we talk to club legend John Drew.**

### When did you first join the club?

I lived in Hitchin whilst playing for Welwyn in the 1976-77 season. A Welwyn game was called-off so I went to watch the Hedgehogs. A club official approached me and asked: "Who are you? Do you play rugby? Why don't you join us?" It was BAJ Chapman!

When Marion and I decided to have a family, her doctor was Adrian Haigh. She handed in her sample and told 'Doc' if she was pregnant I would join Hitchin. When she got her results, Doc told her training was Mondays and Thursdays. I joined in July 1977 and James was born March 1978.

### What playing positions have you played for the club?

Played all my rugby in the 2nd row with a few deviations on tours – my highlight was Fly half in the "Muppet 7" tour.

Captained the 1XV 1978-1980. Broke my leg in October 1978 – the club's 25th Anniversary season, so missed the Hitchin v Hertfordshire Clubs. Captained the 2XV for many years, then played every game for the 1XV the season I was 40 (1987-88) and was nominated 1XV Player of the season. My last competitive game was against Kempston in January 1998 aged 50. Although I did play with the Hogs when Roger Copley was Captain.

I reffed various teams until 2010 – the highlight was probably refereeing the first ladies match at KGV.

### What club roles have you done?

I was Club Chair for 14 years – doing stints as Business and Playing Chair. I helped set up the M&Y section and was Mini/Junior/Colts Coach between 1988-2000.



John with a very young Carwyn Morgan!



John Drew

Other roles included 1XV Captain 1978-80, Club Coach 1980-82 and 2XV Captain from 1982, Hertfordshire RFU Executive Committee Chair for five years and Herts RFU President 2008-10.

### What were your proudest moments?

A difficult one. There are so many!

Starting mini's rugby with Aidan Dwyer, Gerallt Morgan and Alan Swain on 15 September 1988 is one.

Hitchin v Fleetwood April 1993 at Twickenham with hundreds of supporters in the old west stand creating a sea of maroon.

Being involved in the first major club building development in 1994-95 and coming back to see the new changing facilities in 2015.

Playing Letchworth away in November 1987 who were reigning County Cup Holders. The score was 3-3, but we won because it was a draw and away teams went through to the next round.

The year we put out six teams on a Saturday.

Winning the inaugural Middlesex Colts Sevens as the guest team at Barnet Copthall Stadium, now Allianz Park in 1996. Middlesex RFU were not very happy!!

Seeing the club grow and prosper at all levels Junior, Senior, Women and Girls and always being innovative in embracing new ideas and projects.

And I'm still speechless regarding my surprise farewell event the club organised in September 2011.

### What do you like most about the club?

It's the friendliest club I know. The wonderful members and volunteers who are rightly proud of the club that "punches well above their weight".

### And your hopes for the club?

To remain the club it is – built on success and the belief that our game is unique and keep banging the drum throughout Hertfordshire and England Rugby.



# End of Season Senior's Awards Dinner & Dance

The usual end of season celebrations took place in the club's marquee early in May, with a relatively small but happy gathering on the Friday for the M&Y section, and a larger turn out for the seniors on the following night, which saw the EOS awards given out.



## Main awards were:

- |   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| • Team of the Season (President's Trophy)           | <b>Men's 1XV</b>            |
| • 1XV Player of the Season (Wally Hazard Trophy)    | <b>Alistair Southward</b>   |
| • Most Improved Player (Tony Else Trophy)           | <b>Frederick Rooney</b>     |
| • 2XV Player of the Season                          | <b>Will Evans</b>           |
| • 3XV Player of the Season                          | <b>Steve Condie</b>         |
| • Women's Coaches' Player of the Season             | <b>Melissa Ruffell</b>      |
| • Women's Players' Player of the Season             | <b>Flo Oetgen</b>           |
| • Women's Most Improved Player                      | <b>Becky Bolter</b>         |
| • Women's unsung hero award                         | <b>Claire Crompton</b>      |
| • Academy Player of the Season (Tim Millner Trophy) | <b>Harry Baker</b>          |
| • Academy Most Improved Player                      | <b>Chris Holes</b>          |
| • Academy 'Man of Endeavour' (Jim Panter Trophy)    | <b>Harry Renner Bennett</b> |
| • President's Silver Salver                         | <b>Dale Baines</b>          |
| • Chair of M&Y Award (Tony Mangold Cup)             | <b>Andy Dudley</b>          |

# AGM and Officials

At the club Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 28 May 2019, the following people were elected as officers of the club:

- |  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| • PRESIDENT<br>Gerald Morgan                 |                 |
| • CHAIR<br>Peter Tasko                       |                 |
| • VICE CHAIR<br>James Akrill                 |                 |
| • SECRETARY<br>Michael Emmerson              |                 |
| • TREASURER                                  | Chris Jones     |
| • CLUB CAPTAIN                               | Dale Baines     |
| • CHAIR OF WOMENS RUGBY<br>PLAYING COMMITTEE | Claire Crompton |
| • CHAIR OF MENS RUGBY<br>PLAYING COMMITTEE   | Adam Naylor     |
| • CHAIR OF BUSINESS COMMITTEE                | Craig Henshaw   |
| • CHAIR OF BAR COMMITTEE                     | Ian Cowling     |
| • CHAIR OF M&Y SECTION                       | Birant Osman    |
| • HERTS RFU REPRESENTATIVE                   | John Humphries  |



Retiring Club Captain Tom Tidey in action



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Asking people how they're doing in-person during an annual review is great, but we use the analogy that an annual appraisal is the equivalent of taking a bath once per year in relation to Mental Health and Wellbeing. Instead, we promote a culture of regularly checking in, in a non-intrusive manner, through a series of expertly-written questions. This will show your people that you care as you begin to prioritise the conversations that matter.

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# Meet our new Club Captain: Dale Baines

**We have a new Club Captain this season, but he's a seasoned player and coach. Dale Baines introduces himself.**

## Man and Boy

"I joined the club in 1991 as an under 7 with Carwyn Morgan and shared the captaincy of that team with him all the way through to Colts. I played my first 1XV game at 17-years old as full back!

My proudest moments at the rugby club were receiving my first Silver tie as an 18 year old in 2002, winning the treble in 2003/4 season, playing 1XV rugby with Harry Cartwright who I coached as a five-year-old and of course everything to do with coaching the ladies who we went from having only nine players to capping 42 players last season and having an undefeated league season and promotion.

## Aims for 1XV next season

Tom did a fantastic job of captaining the team last season – securing promotion straight back up. My aim this season with the 1XV is a top-half finish to secure our place in the league where I feel we belong! We have a fantastic bunch of leaders within the first team squad with the likes of Ruiri Shanahan, James Bolter, Sean McGinnity and of course my under 7's team-mate Carwyn!

I learnt while coaching the M&Y and ladies teams that it's best to be as positive as possible and to build a strong team around that positivity. I want to do the same as the 1XV captain – that way we'll bond as a stronger men's section from the 1XV to the Vets.

## And as Club Captain

What I want for the whole club is to continue to make it a fantastic place to be, where everyone can be their weird and wonderful selves.



Dale Baines message is: "get involved"

I also want to encourage people to get involved with other sections of the club. For example, we already have some of the ladies helping the men's social media team to try to catch up with their activities.

From the Men's section, Adam Howard and James Donovan are assisting with the coaching of the Ladies 2XV.

And from the M&Y section, Laurie Ray is always there to help with anything to do with Sunday rugby.

We want to encourage greater integration between the M&Y section and the seniors, so we'll be asking for M&Y players from different age groups to come along to help on Saturdays and volunteer for such things as water carriers and the like.

But we'll also be getting senior players down on a Sunday to help with coaching/assisting the mini and youth age-groups. We already have our first volunteer – Jon Welsford. He's recently done some of the coaching badges so is ready to help!

So, if you want to get involved please email me at [ClubCaptain@HitchinRugby.com](mailto:ClubCaptain@HitchinRugby.com)

## NatWest RugbyForce Volunteer day Sunday 23 June 2019

**We were excited to be part of the Rugby Force Volunteer day again this year. With financial support from NatWest, the day gives volunteers the opportunity to get involved and help with work on our clubhouse.**

Some 40 or so volunteers from all sections of the club helped make repairs, redecorated changing rooms, clear some of the kit-stores and generally helped tidy-up around the clubhouse. It makes such a difference to have a clean and tidy clubhouse for the start of the new season.

Thank you to everyone who helped co-ordinated the schedule of works and brought along the materials needed for the work. And a big thank you to the BBQ team as well for feeding our small army on the day.

But most of all a huge, huge big thank you to all the volunteers who made such a difference.



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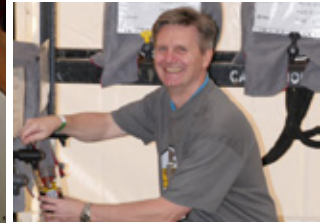
Despite a couple of days of poor weather it was yet another very successful beer and cider festival.

We had a lower footfall than in previous years (still over 2,800) – but those who came remained longer, enjoying more of the fine selection of beers, ciders, perrys and meads on offer. Just over 9,200 pints of ales and 1,500 pints of cider and perry were sold along with a significant volumes on International beer and mead. We were also able to offer a fine selection of different gins and tonics in the Rugby Clubhouse, adding to an already impressive offering.

As usual our contribution to the ranks of unpaid volunteers, along with CAMRA



The Tasko's ready to serve



Hon Sec pulls a pint

and Hitchin Round Table in the planning, setup and take down, was significant and helped to serve visitors and members alike with enthusiasm, smiles and much discussion about the range and merits of the selection available. We must also thank our repeat and new festival Sponsors who ensure that the festival continues to operate successfully with the knowledge that their support continues to make this a successful and very well appreciated regional beer festival.

We have set ourselves a bit of a target for next year in terms of environmental

impact and wish to reduce our carbon footprint with more recycling and a much reduced use of single use plastics by both the festival itself and our food vendors. We are already investigating ways to limit the use of these materials and intend to include additional recycling bins with less waste going to landfill. Please get in touch if you have other ideas that we should be considering. This is going to be a significant focus area for us in the planning for Hitchin Beer Festival 2020, so please watch this space and look out for further announcements in coming months.



#### WEEK 1

Sat, 2 Feb 2020, 15:00  
Stade de France



#### WEEK 4

Sat, 7 Mar 2020, 16:45  
Twickenham Stadium



#### WEEK 2

Sat, 8 Feb 2020, 16:45  
BT Murrayfield Stadium



#### WEEK 5

Sat, 14 Mar 2020, 16:45  
Stadio Olimpico



#### WEEK 3

Sun, 23 Feb 2020, 15:00  
Twickenham Stadium



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## Sponsors' dinner

**130 turned up to the popular annual sponsors' dinner on 20 March, to enjoy an evening's entertainment, hosted by our own thespian and VP, Dougie Brooker.**

Guest speakers were George Chuter (Saracens, Leicester and England) and comedian Gary Marshall, with catering supplied by Sue Stanbury.

This is the club's chance to say a big THANK YOU to all our sponsors.

James Donovan has since taken over as Sponsorship Chairman, and will love to hear from any prospective new sponsor!

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