

WELCOME BACK!

Club points



News for Hitchin Rugby Club members

Issue 41 • September 2021

North Herts Rugby and Netball Festival 2021

The first ever North Herts Rugby and Netball Festival proved to be a huge success!

Combining a sports tournament and a community food festival, Hitchin Rugby Club was awash with happy faces glad to see a sense of normality return thanks to NH21.

With lead sponsors Mason Navarro Pledge (MNP) in tow, the team who delivered the "Back2Schoolival" tournaments from 2015-2018 returned to the festival scene for their first post-pandemic event. A new concept based on local sports clubs brought over 450 players to the site on the day.

18 teams competed in the "CALA Homes" Cup and Social Cup in netball. 16 teams fought it out to take the "Cawsburger Cup" home in the men's 10's tournament. Nine teams went toe to toe in the "Succession Wealth" cup and plate competition in a showcase of ladies Rugby7's.

With the majority of teams hailing from Hertfordshire, accompanied by guests from Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, London, Reading and Buckinghamshire, the sports community



were out in full force with large crowds gathering to cheer their team on.

They were treated to some competitive action, played in good spirits across the board and some tight encounters, none more so than the Men's final which saw Letchworth run out Cawsburger Cup winners after scoring an extra time, golden point try against Cantabs. The home team, Hitchin Ladies, made sure the Succession Wealth Cup stayed in Hitchin by winning their tournament, defeating close neighbours Welwyn in the final.

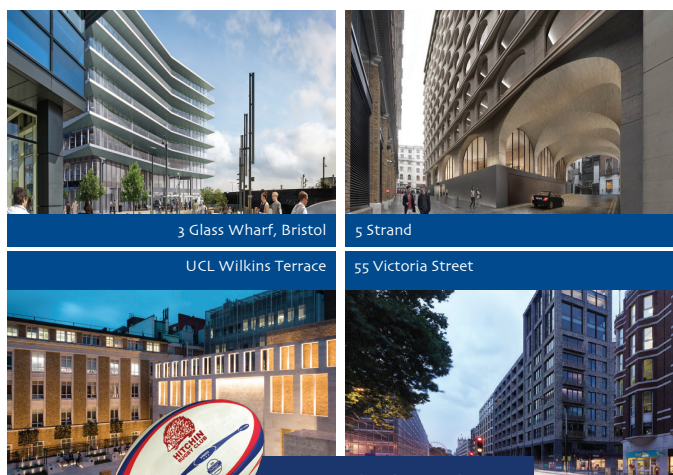
SAS retained the netball title they won in 2018 as they won the incredibly competitive CALA Homes Cup, while makeshift outfit Sag-A-Doo won the CALA Homes plate.

With the sports all tied up, attention turned to the Hitchin Street Food Monthly food festival with six local vendors pitching up and feeding the teams and an ever growing local crowd. Joined by a couple of bars, the likes of Cawsburger, Cantinas Carnitas, Apna Pubjab, Major Crusts, Fussey and Baer, Nonnas, the Hitchin RFC Bar and The Old School Bar company kept everyone refreshed with healthy queues forming until all traders had sold out.

To cap the day off, the incredible Wild Lies blasted 45 minutes of Fleetwood Mac covers out on the CALA Homes stage before delighting the 1,500-strong-crowd with classics from Abba to Shania Twain as the party entered the evening. The local Hitchin community were a credit to the town as danced into the night.



Sarah Bennett



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AGM

**Goodbye ZOOM, and
"HELLO" to @20 members**
The Chairman declared the
AGM quorate and thanked
everyone for coming

Chairman's report

BY PETER TASKO

Another year passes and I am again reporting on a disrupted season. COVID-19 resulted in no league rugby and minimal competitive activity on the field of play. That said, it remains a credit to all the coaches and volunteers who despite circumstances kept activity taking place throughout the lock downs.

Financially, the club has remained strong; support from the government through grants and more importantly from the continued support of our sponsors MNP, Kelly Group, Raymond James, HRJ Foreman Laws and IPM along with donations from the Hitchin Youth Trust have ensured that we have weathered the pandemic without significant financial damage.

When considering finances, I also thank all club members who maintained their subscriptions during the pandemic. Credit also goes to Chris Jones, who's stewardship of the

club finances has yet again helped to secure the Club's position.

The coming season will bring challenges. Our Women's teams have both been promoted and will be travelling greater distances next season, this is a challenge both for player retention and costs, especially given the reduction of financial support from the RFU for the community game. The men's leagues will be restructured at the end of the 2021-22 season so gaining a good league position to ensure promotion is also critical. For M&Y, the loss and disruption of over a year of rugby must be considered an unknown.

The loss of a final youth season for our U18 group was a terrible shame. Missing out on the opportunity to enjoy their last season together is not the fitting end to a long and successful journey in youth rugby and I can but hope it does not dampen their enthusiasm for the game in the future.

Life Members

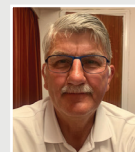
Tim Jeffries informed the meeting of two proposals as Life Members of the club: Peter Tasko and Tim Bonnett.

He introduced their citations and explained they were both nominated by all former and current Club Presidents and were both seconded by the Management Committee.

By show of hands the AGM unanimously voted to ratify the Life Memberships for Peter Tasko and Tim Bonnett.



Peter Tasko



Tim Bonnett

Director/Trustee change

The Secretary confirmed that he was retiring by rotation and that Craig Henshaw-Allcock (pictured right) was seeking election in his stead as a director of Hitchin Rugby Ltd. A resolution was put to the meeting and carried, appointing him as a director, following the recommendation of the other directors.



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The following Officers were nominated and were uncontested:

- **President**
Gerallt Morgan
- **Chair**
Peter Tasko
- **Vice Chair and VP Liaison**
Tim Jeffries
- **Secretary**
Michael Emmerson
- **Treasurer**
Chris Jones
- **1XV Captain/Club Captain**
Sean McGinnity
- **Chair of Mens' Rugby**
James Akrill
- **Chair Of Womens' Rugby**
Claire Crompton
- **Chair of Business Committee**
Craig Henshaw-Allcock
- **Chair of Bar Committee**
TBC
- **Chair of M&Y Section**
Jon Lovick
- **Herts RFU Representative**
John Humphries

Men's playing report 2020-21

The season was hit by Covid-19, but the Men's squad still trained twice a week between July 2020 and May 2021 – except for the enforced lockdown breaks in November 2020 and January to March 2021.



Team shot v Biggleswade

The challenge was to meet the Covid-19 rules. The MNP Cup (a touch tournament) had 80+ attendees for midweek and Saturday matches played throughout December 2020.

Matches were also played in May 2021, with a loss to Stockwood Park in the last minute of the game. This meant we played in a Plate competition with wins against Biggleswade and Royston and Hitchin winning the Plate competition. The 2XV lost their plate final to Biggleswade and had a friendly game vs Stevenage that ended in a 36-36 draw.



Brodie Feaver (scrum half) v Biggleswade

Numbers at training have been really good with a consistent group of players training throughout. The Men's section has also recruited three new coaches to the Adam Shaw's team: Ian Crompton as defence coach, Gary Ayres as S&C coach and Gavin McLeod as an assistant coach.

Ladies update

Hitchin Ladies have had a great preseason so far which is standing the squad in good stead as both our teams enter new leagues this year off the back of promotion. In addition to seeing great numbers at preseason training and lots of new faces, we have also returned to competitive contact rugby post-Covid.

We had our first run-out at Shelford 7s in July and most recently North Herts 21, where we won the Women's X Rugby 7s tournament.

Last weekend, we played our first preseason friendly against Fullerians Ladies which we won 21-0, a great result considering this was the first 15-a-side match in more than 18 months. Now, our attention turns to our upcoming preseason matches against Hampstead on 4 September, Royston on 9th September, and Shelford on the 12th September.

We are also hosting a Pitch Up and Play event on 11 September (12:30-2pm) as part of the RFU's celebration of rugby week, where we hope to recruit more new players in preparation for the season ahead.

The upcoming season gets underway on the 26 September with both teams playing at home - the 1st XV face West Bridgford while the 2nd XV play Royston.



Ladies training for new season



Exhausted winners at HR21

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Hitchin

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Happy to support
Hitchin Rugby Club Ladies



MARCH

23

Sponsors' Dinner...

Wednesday
23 March 2022

More details
to follow!

Mini & Youth season

BY BIRANT OSMAN



Last season was arguably one of the most challenging in the club's history with the impact of the COVID19 pandemic and the restrictions that followed. Given this, M&Y took a pragmatic and forward looking approach for ensuring everyone's safety taking the appropriate steps for our return back to rugby.

Over the course of the season we saw the club progress from stages A/B (lockdown) right through to E adapted contact on the RFU return to rugby road map which meant that the children/

players, coaches and parents were able to enjoy a fun and safe return back to the club.

Towards the end of the season we saw training return to near normal and most notably return of fixtures and hosting matches with the likes of Letchworth, OAs, Royston, Welwyn, Barnet, and Watford. Given the length of time away from matches, Hitchin did not forget how to Win!

The season was capped off with a fantastic Founders Day finale with the sun shining, BBQ and bar open with the children playing rugby games and

receiving medals again. The smiles on their faces was an extremely satisfying outcome of the day and our season!

Finally, it is my last season as Chair of M&Y. So I would like to thank everyone for their personal support and the support and dedication from all of the players and volunteers that helped M&Y get through everything. This is what makes the club as successful as it is. Moving forward, I'm confident the club is in very safe hands and I wish my successors and the rest of club the very best of luck for an enjoyable and successful new season!



GUINNESS
SIX NATIONS



2022

ROUND ONE	 v 	Ireland v Wales	Saturday 5 February	KO TBC	Dublin
	 v 	Scotland v England	Saturday 5 February	KO TBC	Edinburgh
	 v 	France v Italy	Sunday 6 February	KO TBC	Paris
ROUND TWO	 v 	Wales v Scotland	Saturday 12 February	KO TBC	Cardiff
	 v 	France v Ireland	Saturday 12 February	KO TBC	Paris
	 v 	Italy v England	Sunday 13 February	KO TBC	Rome
ROUND THREE	 v 	Scotland v France	Saturday 26 February	KO TBC	Edinburgh
	 v 	England v Wales	Saturday 26 February	KO TBC	Twickenham
	 v 	Ireland v Italy	Sunday 27 February	KO TBC	Dublin
ROUND FOUR	 v 	Wales v France	Friday 11 March	KO TBC	Cardiff
	 v 	Italy v Scotland	Saturday 12 March	KO TBC	Rome
	 v 	England v Ireland	Saturday 12 March	KO TBC	Twickenham
ROUND FIVE	 v 	Wales v Italy	Saturday 19 March	KO TBC	Cardiff
	 v 	Ireland v Scotland	Saturday 19 March	KO TBC	Dublin
	 v 	France v England	Saturday 19 March	KO TBC	Paris

Members should receive a web mail with application forms for the England games, home and away.

Our thanks to Debbie Jeffries, who is undertaking the onerous job of International Ticket Secretary.

VP'S CORNER

I am delighted to take on the VP Liaison role from Martin Howard – it gives me every opportunity to give hour long speeches at VP lunches! I know so many of you will look forward to that.



First up, hearty thanks to Martin for the magnificent work he did as VP commander over eight years. Really appreciated by all of us Martin.

Thanks to you too, our VPs. In this Covid 18 months when we have had virtually no bar income, VP subscriptions have been a life line to the club alongside our fantastic sponsors. As we know, costs don't stop when income does! Donations from VPs doubled during the year – thank you, you have made Jonesy very happy.

If Boris is true to his word then we should be able to meet up for lunches again this coming season – the first one being 23 October against St Albans. I reckon that might be a sell-out. At that lunch we'll award the Hywell Jones VP of the Year award and thanks for your nominations....

Other dates for lunches are 11 December (Welwyn), 29 January (St Evenage) and 12 March (Cheshunt).

I know we all wish Bob and Hazel Newbury a happy retirement in the west country. It will be very strange not having them in the bungalow after all these years. They have always been on hand to help out and many a time I used to ask Bob for help with unlocking, lights or whatever when I was M&Y Chair. Many of us will have reason to say thanks to them and it will be good to invite them back as guests at the next VP lunch.

A quick word to wish Tim Millner and Tom Scullion all the best. Both have not been the full ticket in recent months and we wish them well.

My plan is to try to keep you informed about the club with email newsletters and it would be good to see more VPs regularly supporting our teams and to see more of our younger VPs at events. All being well we are going to be back to proper rugby in September and let's make sure we VPs do our bit in supporting our men's, women's and mini & youth teams.

Tim Jeffries

After a delay of 15 months, we are delighted to report that despite COVID-19 we are again hosting the Hitchin Beer and Cider festival at KGV.

This autumn, running from 23-25 September, this year's festival is by necessity in a different format and somewhat smaller than we have become accustomed to. Nonetheless, we can still boast 35+ real ales, 16 real ciders and perrys, mead and a host of craft beers from the Esky bar. We are also very pleased to offer a fantastic range of foreign beers of differing styles. A range of food vendors plus of course the club BBQ will also be present over the weekend.

To run this year's festival, we have had to be run as an all pre-purchased ticket event, with sales on-line and split over five sessions to allow us to maintain social distancing etc. We have also had to organise the event in just the last six weeks, so please accept that we cannot make it as expansive as usual.

As is the current practice, this is a COVID-19 aware event, so social distancing, hand washing/



sanitizing and pre event testing of double vaccination are a requisite of attendance and we strongly encourage all attendees and volunteers to continue with testing in the days following the event.

Let's all hope this is a success, and we are back bigger and better next year.

I look forward to seeing you there.

Peter Tasko

Club Chair and Festival Co-organiser

TOUCH RUGBY

BY DEREK KERR

- Continues every Monday 7-8.30pm and Wednesday 7.30-9pm, all welcome, some really good turnouts over the Summer despite being holiday season, looking to maintain this into the coming season.
- Hitchin entered the Cambridge festival 5 June, no silverware but some great games
- Hitchin were plate winners in Royston festival 10 July.
- I was selected to play for our regional over 45s side Midlands Tigers in the Nationals, and we won all four pool games and the final!
- Thomas Kerr was selected to play for U18s Midlands Tigers, scored two tries, won all pool games but came runners up in the final narrowly losing by one try.



Hitchin at the Cambridge festival



Thomas Kerr scoring for Midlands Tigers



Plate winners at the Royston festival

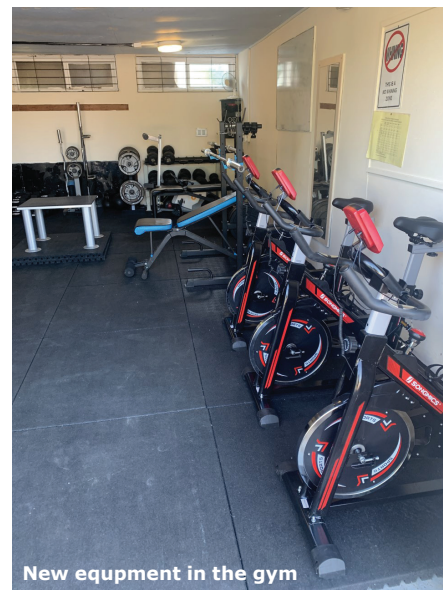
Behind the scenes...

BY PETER TASKO

Despite the pandemic, routine work continued behind the scenes on activities to maintain and improve our ability to deliver rugby:

- The pitches have been repaired and improved, old pitch furniture has been replaced and floodlights serviced.
- We are also working with NHDC to gain access to additional playing surfaces.
- In addition, the gym has been redecorated and reequipped under the supervision of Gary Ayres with assistance from player volunteers.
- Craig Henshaw and his team on the business committee have overseen the renovation and decoration of the bar facilities. Thanks to Peter Stanbury and Laurie Ray in particular.
- New picnic tables have been purchased and located on the field. My thanks also go the VPs who helped in the assembly and position the benches and to Martin Perry for surface preparation.
- We are currently in the process of replacing old bar furniture to ensure that our social spaces remain as good as those we have for playing.
- We have undertaken repairs and upgrades to some essential clubhouse electrics and recommissioned the water systems to make them legionella safe after the lockdowns.

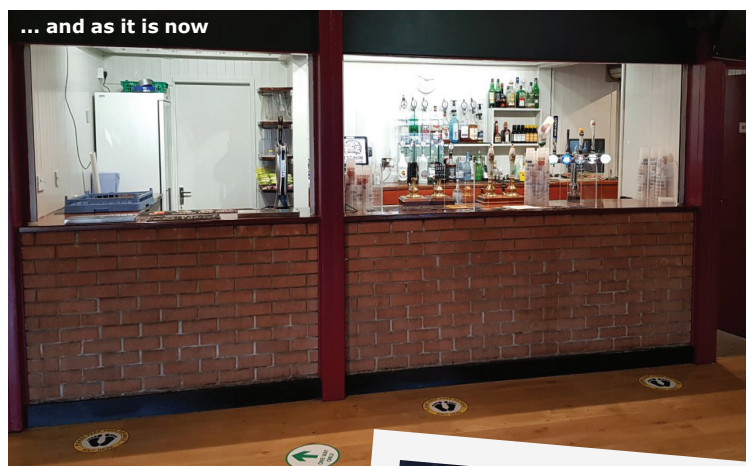
Without volunteers these tasks would not have been completed, so thanks go to all of you!



New equipment in the gym



The bar as it was



... and as it is now



New picnic tables

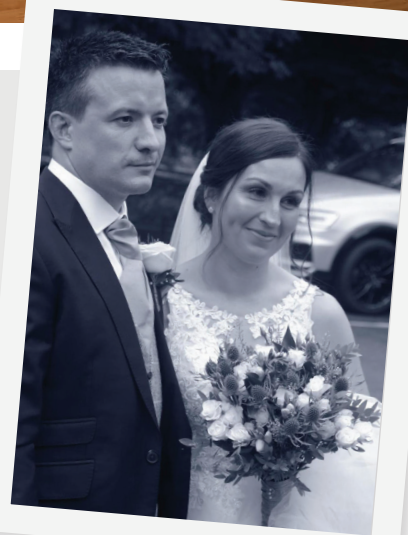


Introducing... Mr & Mrs Morgan

It is rumored that Carwyn was born in the clubhouse. Certainly he was soon being coached (to drink) by chairman John Drew.

He captained the club in 2007-2009, and has been in the 1XV squad as long as most of us can remember. Sensibly choosing a date outside of the rugby season, he married the lovely Gabrielle Jones on 14 August 2021.

Congratulations to them both!



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