

Club points



News for Hitchin Rugby Club members

Issue 42 • September 2022

New County President from Hitchin



It is tremendous to announce that the new Hertfordshire RFU County President is one of our own – Tim Bonnett. A great honour for Tim and of course a great honour for Hitchin Rugby. Tim becomes our third County President after BAJ Chapman and John “Grandad” Drew.

Tim has given so much, for over 30 years, to Hitchin, County and National rugby and it is a fitting honour to be recognised for that as our County President. Tim is also a Hitchin Vice President and became one of the few

Life Members of the rugby club last year.

Tim is a well-known personality around the club having given over 25 years' service to the mini and youth committee and to mini and youth coaching. He was club

safeguarding officer for 25 years where he did an outstanding job. He was Chair of mini and youth rugby in 1999.

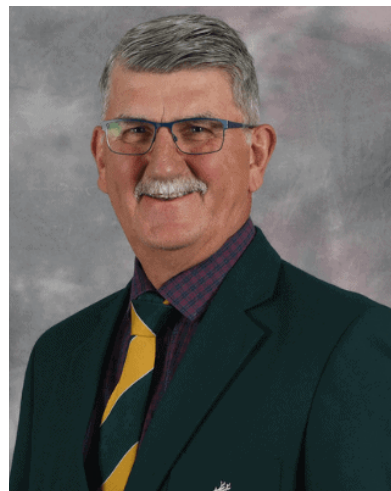
A keen playing member of the club, Tim was also a coach of the Ladies squad.

Indeed, his commitment to inclusivity in sport, and rugby in particular, has been a real driver for him.

Just continuing a snapshot of Tim's commitment to the game, he was the founder of the Hertfordshire School of Rugby, coach of many County youth teams and also held down a role working

for the RFU Injured Players Foundation.

His County career includes 20 years as Hertfordshire Safeguarding Officer and election to the Hertfordshire CB Executive some 15 or so years ago, initially as Director of Representative Rugby.



Here is what Tim has to say:

"I take on the mantle of President of Hertfordshire RFU with great pride knowing I follow in the footsteps of giants 'Badg' (Brian Chapman) and Grandad (John Drew) from Hitchin RFC. My focus throughout my tenure will be on player welfare and safety – safeguarding players of all ages and genders.

Key targets I have are to get the Govox check-in and mental health support package used by Hitchin in place at all Hertfordshire clubs and to get all coaches of all teams with the skills to teach tackling and the contact area skills so player safety is prioritised.

Rugby is a great game and I will do all I can with my Hertfordshire Executive colleagues to ensure players and player families feel confident that they can play and enjoy the sport in an environment that is safe mentally, physically and all safeguarding ways. That is how Hitchin operates I am proud to say and I want to see Hedgehog values in every Herts club."

Congratulations from your clubmates at Hitchin Tim. Quite a rugby CV there and we know the reputation of Hitchin Rugby is further enhanced by your service to the game.



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Men's 1XV

The Men's 1XV finished 3rd in London 3 North West, with a league record of 12 wins and six losses.

Hitchin began their campaign with two pre-season friendly wins, followed by a 73-0 win at Tabard in our opening league fixture. Five further wins followed, before three consecutive losses dropped us to fifth at the halfway mark. The second half of the season started apace, with a 41-3 home victory against Harrow, and when we beat Finchley away we re-took top spot in the league. Unfortunately 2022 mirrored 2021, and defeats to Hendon, Cheshunt and Welwyn dropped us



Will Evans scores against Harrow

out of title contention. An entertaining 54-22 win against Tabard closed out the season.

Third place at Level 8 means that Hitchin finished in their highest league position since the RFU leagues began in 1998. That with the youngest average squad age we have had in a number of seasons, including a high proportion of homegrown players. Highlights include doing the double over title winners Finchley, and a

similar double over long term rivals St Albans – the coolly slotted Ben Wiggins penalty for the last play home victory will live long in the memory, as will the polished performance for a 43-17 victory at Boggymead.

Over the summer, we received the

thrilling news that we had been promoted to Level 7 for the first time in the club's history! Hitchin will compete in the rebranded Counties 1 Herts/Middlesex league in what promises to be an exciting 22/23 season for the club.



Ben Wiggins converts again versus Tabard



Ian Crompton bursts through v Tabard

Men's 2XV

The Men's 2XV, known as the Development XV, finished fifth in Herts/Middlesex Merit Table 3, with a league record of nine wins, seven losses and a draw.

Hitchin began their campaign with a pre-season friendly win over Stevenage, but lost their opening league fixture at Epping on a difficult week for numbers. Four wins followed, and we sat second in the table at Christmas. The Devs lost 21-15 at league leaders Tring, but then lost three of the next four. A strong win at Hemel was followed by a draw at Welwyn, before a strong Hendon side overtook us in the league with a thumping win. The final match was a classic, with a try of the season contender giving us the 20-15 victory over Epping.

Highlights include a trio of victories over Stevenage, a terrific 27-15 home win over league winners Tring, another double over St Albans, and dramatic wins over Harpenden and Epping. A regular core of players, many of whom were playing their first season of Rugby for Hitchin, garnered an encouraging consistency to selection, and they will be all the better for their experiences in a competitive merit table. The 2XV were also promoted, and will compete in Herts/Middlesex Merit Table 2 in the 22/23 season.

Men's 3XV

The Men's 3XV finished the 2021/22 season with a record of one win and 11 losses.

The team was hampered by being placed in Merit Table 4, which proved to be far too competitive and not a match for the players we had available. Nevertheless, the lads competed manfully, and came so close to defeating Letchworth in the opening fixture of the season. A terrific 42-5 win over Harpenden was a highlight, including Spanish winger Carlos Jurado scoring four tries, on a day when all three senior men's teams won.

After Christmas we were moved into Merit Table 5, but we struggled to field a side due to poor availability among the squad. A high scoring 30-40 defeat against Shelford could have gone either way, and an enjoyable Friday night fixture with Datchworth could have been won, had our opponents not fielded Colts and some 1st teamers against a group of veterans!

Considering it takes over 50 men to field three sides, we take pride in having fulfilled 12 3XV fixtures this season. At social rugby level, wins and losses are less important than enjoying the game we love and propping up the bar afterwards. Captain Kam has worked hard to form a solid base of social players, and we aim to field three sides more regularly in 2022/23. The 3XV will compete in the bottom Merit Table 4, giving all Hitchin players access to social rugby.

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Hitchin Ladies' season

The team presents a signed shirt to outgoing captain of five years Emma Cramphorn

The ladies section had a very successful 2021-22 season, with both teams entering higher leagues after double promotion prior to the pandemic.

The 2XV put out a strong showing in NC2 despite several results not going our way, welcoming a raft of new players into our ranks. Many 2XV players made the transition into the 1XV throughout the season, proving the calibre of talent and effort across the entire squad.

The 1XV's debut season in Championship 2 Midlands was also successful, finishing third in the league and being the only team to knock league leaders Worcester off their pedestal towards the end of the season. Looking ahead to the 2022-23 season, the 1XV is looking to top the table and secure promotion to Championship 1 level – a goal we believe is fully within our reach.

For the 2022-23 season we have a refreshed coaching team. Led by Head Coach Nat Mabbett, Alex Nolan remains within the set up in a new role as Assistant Coach, while ex-England international Jane Everett joins as Forwards Coach.

We are now fully in the swing of preseason, and are pleased to be welcoming both new and returning players into the fold. Before the season gets underway in September, we are looking to retain our crown at NH22 on 13th August and are also looking to make an impact at Hen 7s at the end of the month.



Six of the squad represent Herts County with Nat Mabbett as Assistant Coach and Claire Crompton as Team Manager



The Ladies win the cup on tour at Heart of Wales 7s

Mini & Youth

The rugby this season has been outstanding:

- **The Colts** ended their season at the top of their league being undefeated. This bodes well for next season as the majority of the squad are U17s so will stay on for one more season.
- **U15s** have continued to impress with their win against Tring in the Herts County Cup final at the end of the season.
- **U14s** narrowly missed out on their own Cup Final place losing to Welwyn in a home draw, and losing the match on the away team rule.
- **U13s** have arrived on the Youth stage with a great showing in their first year of league rugby with their A-team remaining almost undefeated
- The **U18G** maintained good numbers thanks to strong coaching which resulted in great improvement in playing and resulted in four players selected for the Centre of Excellence Programme and one doing pre-season training with Saracens Women.
- **U15G** reached the last 16 of the National competition and remained mostly undefeated over the season. Five players have played for Hertfordshire recently.
- The **U13G** have developed into a very strong squad with increasing numbers thanks to some very proactive recruitment from a recent schools event.

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NH RN Festival

Hitchin RFC hosted the North Herts Rugby and Netball Festival on Friday 12 and Saturday 13 August.

The ever-popular event returned to King Georges playing field in August with 450 people playing in the netball, women's rugby and men's rugby competitions on Saturday and 1,000 through the gates throughout Friday and Saturday to sample the amazing local street food on offer, enjoy the live local music and of course support their rugby club by purchasing a pint or two from the bar.

Hitchin had teams in both the men and women's competitions again this year, with the men playing 10's and the women XRugby7's. The men enjoyed some good run outs and wins as they were knocked out in the semi final stage in a thrilling contest with Bedford Queens, while the women once again reigned supreme as they retained the title they won last year,

Sponsors' dinner

After two years' absence due to Covid, this popular event returned on 23 March 2022.

Approximately 130 sat down to an excellent meal provided by Sue Stanbury, and enjoyed a speech from the RFU President, His Honour Jeff Blackett

Jeff retired as a Circuit Judge and from the position of Judge Advocate General on 1 November 2020.

He played rugby for the Royal Navy, Hampshire and the United Services Portsmouth Rugby Football Club

He and his wife Sally enjoyed their visit, describing the evening as a really good example of community rugby at its best.



Comedian Rod Woodward brought the evening to a close with a superb performance, confirming his reputation as a top laughter maker!

A rugby loving Welshman- what more do you want!



Hitchin Ladies retained their trophy

defeating charity side Balls for Brains and Reading Abbey in the final. Hitchin Ladies also had representation in the plate competition where they teamed up with new friends Guernsey. The women's plate was eventually won by Dartfordians. Letchworth Women took the development cup and in doing so won their first ever silverware as a section, while Letchworth sealed a winning double as their men prevailed again in the men's 10's.

Another brilliant day of rugby in the scorching heat and well supported by the Hitchin community. This was also the first year where the event welcomed more women's teams than men's teams which shows how the tournament is growing each year.

Plans are taking shape for 2023 so make sure you are following [@nhrnx2022](https://twitter.com/nhrnx2022) for updates on next years instalment.

MNP were lead sponsors of the event while other club partner, Raymond James, sponsored the women's rugby. Hitchin player, Charlie Wood-

Jones' Cawsburger, was the men's rugby sponsor while Understanding Recruitment sponsored the netball.



James Hunt scores for Hitchin

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NEW CLUB PRESIDENT!

We welcome David Marshall as the new *larger than life* President for the club at the start of his five-year term. David has Hitchin Rugby Club in his DNA.

It's worth reminding ourselves about our new President and, some, especially those from M&Y among our number, may not know him... yet. David has been a club member for over 40 years joining the club in 1980 when he played both Colts and 1XV rugby. He went on to play 1XV rugby until his retirement in 1998.

David was a playing enigma at Hitchin and a rallying point for players. He had a season at Wasps in 1984 but that was a blip in a successful career at Hitchin where he was 1XV Captain in 1992/93 and Club Captain from 1996 to 1998. He led our team on the fabled journey to Twickenham in '93 to the Junior RFU Cup Final when most of the town travelled down to HQ to support!

After playing he coached at the club for almost 10 years before moving on to coach Ampthill and Dunstablians. He joined the RFU in 2003 and was a successful Community Rugby Coach until leaving in 2020.

Well known about the club over the years, David was always a 'presence' and gave his time freely. Many Hitchin junior sides would have enjoyed his guest coaching and his reference to them as 'muppets!'.

David is a great believer in rugby for all and will get to know all of our playing groups in time. David says: "I have a lot to catch up on as there have been a number of changes but, that said, I am looking forward to helping out where I can across all the sections".

Throughout David's long and distinguished rugby odyssey, he would proudly tell anyone who asked that his home club was, and is, Hitchin.



SIX NATIONS 2023 SCHEDULE

ROUND 1

WALES vs IRELAND	Sat 4 Feb	2.15pm
ENGLAND vs SCOTLAND	Sat 4 Feb	4.45pm
ITALY vs FRANCE	Sun 5 Feb	3pm

ROUND 2

IRELAND vs FRANCE	Sat 11 Feb	2.15pm
SCOTLAND vs WALES	Sat 11 Feb	4.45pm
ENGLAND vs ITALY	Sun 12 Feb	3pm

ROUND 3

ITALY vs IRELAND	Sat 25 Feb	2.15pm
WALES vs ENGLAND	Sat 25 Feb	4.45pm
FRANCE vs SCOTLAND	Sun 26 Feb	3pm

ROUND 4

ITALY vs WALES	Sat 11 Mar	2.15pm
ENGLAND vs FRANCE	Sat 11 Mar	4.45pm
SCOTLAND vs IRELAND	Sun 12 Mar	3pm

ROUND 5

SCOTLAND vs ITALY	Sat 18 Mar	12.30pm
FRANCE vs WALES	Sat 18 Mar	4.45pm
IRELAND vs ENGLAND	Sat 18 Mar	5pm

VP'S CORNER

In welcoming our new President, David Marshall we know the next five years will be a lot of fun...



However, can I voice a big thanks from all of the VPs to the work of Gerallt Morgan and Miss Babs over the past five years as our President and Mrs President. The Welsh Wizard was at every function, and supported all sections, while Babs took a keen interest in everything and everyone! I know they will remain part of the fixtures and fittings but thanks to them for a great Presidency.

It will be strange not taking the mickey out of The Welsh Wizard at VP lunches over the coming season but I will probably find a way! We have a concentration of VP lunches in the early part of the season as the league runs from the very beginning of September until early March. Dates are:

- 17 September (Hampstead),
- 5 November (Welwyn)
- 17 December (Datchworth)
- 18 February (Finchley).

Our new President is very keen, as am I, that we can mark at least one of the Ladies 1xv games with a VP Lunch so watch this space.

It was great to see some of our younger VPs at events last season and let's hope that continues. Let's make sure we VPs do our bit in supporting the club financially and supporting our men's, women's and mini & youth teams from pitchside.

Tim Jeffries

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Back up to full size and firing on all cylinders, the 2022 Hitchin Beer and Cider Festival burst back onto the Hitchin Social scene during the second week in June. More than 3,000 visitors joined us at King George's Playing Fields to socialise and celebrate in glorious sunshine.

The festival offered a wide range of beers, ciders, perries and meads and was accompanied with a selection of world foods, ranging from spicy curries, to flavour bursting burritos and mustard drenched bratwursts.

With a stunning 40 metres of marquee arrayed before the clubhouse, it was great to see so many people relaxing on the sun drenched grass enjoying the setting and the company. A great atmosphere and a magnificent event.

Highlight of the festival for me, was the cider bar on Friday night – fully staffed by VP's, committee members

and our Women's section – it was a well-oiled machine in action. Go Hitchin!

The festival is a great fundraiser for the club and for our co-organisers and friends in North Herts CAMRA and Hitchin Round Table. It's all brought to you by volunteers and by the very generous support by our festival sponsors. If you want to be part of the event next year, watch this space and keep an eye on Club Webmail in the New Year.

Peter Tasko
Club Chair

AGM

The following Officers were nominated and were uncontested:

- **President**
David Marshall
- **Chair**
Peter Tasko
- **Vice Chair and VP Liaison**
Tim Jeffries
- **Secretary**
Tony Russell
- **Treasurer**
Chris Jones
- **1XV Captain**
James Bolter
- **Chair of Mens' Rugby**
James Akkrill
- **Chair Of Womens' Rugby**
Claire Crompton



James Bolter second term as 1XV Captain

- **Chair of Business Committee**
Craig Henshaw-Allcock
- **Chair of Bar Committee**
Amy Haughton
- **Chair of M&Y Section**
Jon Lovick
- **Herts RFU Representative**
John Humphries

- **Team of the season (President's Trophy)**
Men's 1XV

- **Players' player of the season (Wally Hazard trophy)**
Ben Wiggins

- **Most improved player (Tony Else trophy)**
Phill Ryan

- **2XV player of the season**
James Hunt

- **3XV player of the season**
not awarded

- **Women's coaches' player of the season**
Charley Hamilton

- **Women's players' player of the season**
Lucy Kennedy

- **Women's most improved player**
Deanna Stamp

- **Women's unsung hero award**
Mel Ruffell



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HITCHIN
RUGBY CLUB