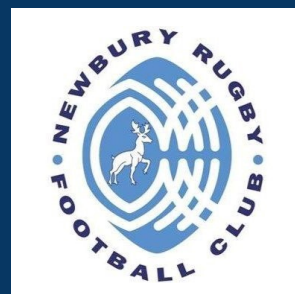


BLUES NEWS

KEEPING IN TOUCH - 15

JULY 2021



This newsletter is sponsored by



**Newbury
Building Society**

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KEEPING IN TOUCH

If you would like to contribute to the next Blues News, please email content to [David Jones](#), [Brian Lee](#) or [Sarah Thorne](#).

**NEWBURY
RUGBY CLUB**

Arguably this June and July have been the best sporting months for many years!! You maybe watching the bruising encounters of the Lions, listening to the sounds of bat and ball in the T20 series, got emotional watching England lose the Euros final (I knew it was a mistake to watch), or maybe you failed again to get tickets for Wimbledon (it's almost as good on TV), bet on the wrong horses at Ascot (but don't worry you'll get your money back at Glorious Goodwood) or decided that the Open Golf has inspired you to take it up (don't, it's frustrating and very annoying) or watched the drama at the Grand Prix, the Rugby League Cup Final, The Tour de France and then there's the small thing called the Olympics!! I don't think the superstars performing there actually inhabit the same planet as us but I am delighted that our own drama and excitement (and the odd refreshment) return to Monks Lane in less than seven weeks, as we begin the 2021 season.

.....And we Kick off the season with a glorious Blues v Grove fixture on 4th September. Now this is where sport is really played - supporting local players playing in local derbys - watching the Thorne brothers, Josh Winfield or Robbie Drysdale scoring tries (or in Robbie's case kamakaze tackling anything) or Lizzie Harris stepping down the wing and leaving the opposition in her wake. All that fantasy stuff we watch in the UK, is behind us and we can get back to the real world - supporting our local community club.

So what is happening at NRFC?

Training has now started in earnest and we have set up a coaching academy headed up by James McAvoy and Paul Archer, to ensure we have the best co-ordinated and skilled coaching set up in the county, throughout the club. Junior rugby's transition to senior rugby at Colts level is a priority and the Colts will now train on the same night as the seniors.

Membership for the new season is now open so please help the club get off to a secure start financially by taking up your membership as soon as possible. A chance to really help your club.

Discussions with WBC regarding the all weather pitch on Pitch 5 are still ongoing, and we will keep you posted in that regard. Discussions were well advanced but as always the detail is key. Time-consuming weekly meetings are happening with the ball currently in the Council's court.

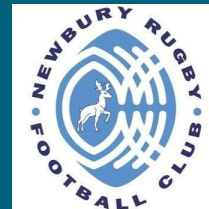
The AGM was held recently and thank you to all those who attended, either in person or via Zoom. Thanks also to Christine and Julian for ensuring it could take place. Everyone was re-elected and a big thank you to all those officials who volunteer their time for free. This club is only here because of the time given by our volunteers. As last year did not happen there was a conscious desire to try and see this transitional time in the club's history through for another year, BUT there is a need for new ideas and new volunteers to step up for next year. Anyone who might be interested in helping a little, this would be a great time to let us know as there is a very experienced team here to help. Don't leave it to someone else.

The club has been very busy re-letting the venue as business returns to the club and I was delighted and surprised to know last week we let three pitches to the British Longbow Society which includes long-standing Blues members - Tina and Tony Dines, for their all-day shoot - creative summer use! The commercial team are working very hard on our behalf and deserve a lot of praise. Remember every beer or coffee or burger you buy helps your club. The club facilities are excellent and ideal for children's parties through the summer and autumn.

Paul Archer's summer camps are happening so please check out the details on the [website](#) to see if your child would like to benefit from these. It's a great opportunity for them to get ahead with their skills.

BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

100 CLUB WINNERS



We have some paid jobs and volunteer positions available so please look further on in the newsletter for details of these - WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Communication is the key in any organisation and invariably it's the weakest link. It's probably ours, and exacerbated by the fact that every team has its own Whatsapp group or individual way of communicating. We are ONE COMMUNITY RUGBY CLUB which requires the support of other members from outside are own group from time to time to make things a success. Please engage with Pitchero and our website on a regular basis to ensure you are up-to-date with what is happening. Share what you are doing within the club or let me know so I can put it in the newsletter. You will be very surprised how many others are interested in what you are doing.

See pg3 for What's On at Monks Lane, and put the dates in your diary.

Finally, it was very sad to report recently of the sudden passing of Chris Whittaker, the son of the founder member of NRFC. I knew Chris well and everyone who knew Chris remembers him as the perfect gentleman. He was in charge of the tannoy for many years, the friendly, fair, diplomatic voice of Newbury RFC, respecting the opposition but also encouraging the crowd to get behind the Blues. He generously supported financially and through the organisation of the club; he was a former player in the 1970s and early '80s and of course, a great supporter. He would stop and talk to everybody and he will be sadly missed.

Enjoy the summer and get ready !! COYB!!

David Jones - President

**DON'T MISS OUT
BUY YOUR
TICKET NOW**

Congratulations to our latest 100 Club winners:

April

1st Brian Trott

2nd Ryan Davis

3rd Julian Lewis

May

1st Russ Kennerley

2nd Brent Bartlett

3rd Robin Varley

June

1st Len Whittaker

2nd David Jones

3rd Nigel Beal

A **BIG 'THANK YOU'** once again to recent winners who have very kindly donated their winnings to the Club's Good Exchange projects.

100+ CLUB

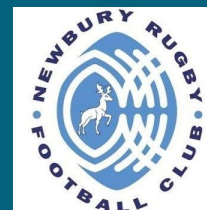
*Have you bought your ticket yet?
Did you have an annual ticket
that has expired?*

**Help support your club from just £2
a month - buy a monthly or annual
ticket via Pitchero.**

**You have to be in it
to win it!!**

BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR - RUGBY 'RE-BOOT' 2021-22



Dear all

It's refreshing that at last we are able to look ahead to next season, hoping it will be more of what we are used to, with games and leagues restarting and gatherings of our rugby community re-established.

With that in mind we need to move forward, having taken stock of the last 18 months and listened to our members and players on things like membership and club activity, to ensure we take on learning and move forward with confidence.

The Club doesn't under-estimate the support it has received from its membership over the last twelve to eighteen months, which has in no small part enabled it to remain focused and plan for its future.

On 1st July, to start the "re-boot" we launched new simplified membership arrangements which reduce the number of categories. This year we have included a new "family" group category, purposely to support this group of members, with children playing across different age groups. The new categories of membership are listed below.

2021-22 Membership:

We are introducing just 5 categories of playing membership and 2 categories of supporter membership. A full definition of each category can be found on pitchero but a summary is provided in the table below. If you have individual membership queries, please contact the membership secretary – sarah.rugby.NRFC@outlook.com.

NEW 2021-22 MEMBERSHIP SUMMARY

Categories	Price (dd from 01/08)	Early Bird (available to 31/07)	Voting Rights	International Tickets	Club Bar Discount
Senior Player	£225	£202.50	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social & Touch Player	£120	£108	Yes	Yes	Yes
Youth Player (U6-U18)	£170	£153	*Yes	*Yes	*Yes
Family	£220	£198	*Yes	*Yes	*Yes
Student	£50	£45	No	No	Yes
Gold	£200	£180	Yes	Yes	Yes
Blues	£110	£99	Yes	Yes	Yes

*applicable to adult member only

There are more initiatives in development, for example a "friends of the Club" initiative which aims to bring old friends and players together and retain their connection to NRFC. Look out for more information on these, coming soon.

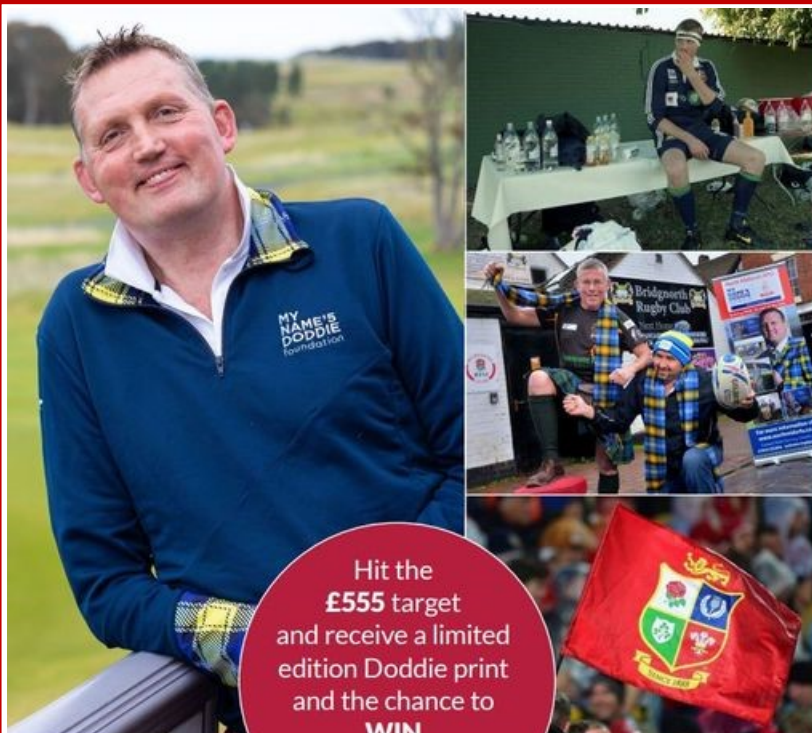
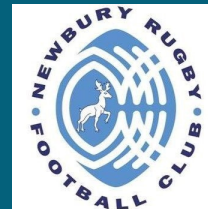
In the meantime, on behalf of the club, please renew your membership as soon as you can and take advantage of the early bird discount which finishes soon.

Kind regards,

Lou Goodall - Chair

BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

DODDIE'S LIONS SUPER SATURDAY



Hit the
£555 target
and receive a limited
edition Doddie print
and the chance to
WIN
Ultimate Lions
Prizes

Pitchero

For more information please see www.mynamedoddie.co.uk/whats-on

MY
NAME'S
DODDIE
foundation



Doddie's Lions Super Saturday

Saturday 24th July

Doddie Weir encapsulated what it means to be a Lion but he now faces his biggest battle against MND.

Bring your club together on the day of the first test against South Africa, raise £555 for the My Name's Doddie Foundation, and help Doddie tackle this terrible disease.

Doddie's Lions Super Saturday

Saturday 24th July
Lions vs S Africa (K.O. 5pm)

Come and join us on **Saturday 24 July** for a pre-season social and fundraising event for Doddie Weir's "My Name's Doddie Foundation" which helps to fund research into Motor Neurone Disease (MND); all whilst watching the 1st Test of the **British & Irish Lions vs South Africa**.

We aim to raise at least £555 so that the Club can be entered into a draw to win incredible rugby prizes including a signed print of Doddie; a team coaching session with former Lions Head Coach Sir Ian McGeehan; and a visit from Legendary Welsh referee Nigel Owens to ref a club match.

Bars open at 3.00pm with BBQ from 3.30pm

There's a 'Guess the Score' competition with a jackpot cash prize; and a **Raffle**. The match kicks off at 5.00pm and there'll be **live music** afterwards from ~6.30pm with **local singer & guitarist Sion Whiley** who'll be entertaining us with a selection of songs from the '60s to modern day classics to suit all tastes of music - armed with his trusty loop pedal he's the contemporary one man band!

To help gauge numbers for catering, please would you pre-register for FREE on <https://tinyurl.com/hhthtzvz>

We've also set up a **Just Giving page**, which anyone can use to make a small donation, even if you're unable to come on the day: <https://tinyurl.com/xvafxz59>

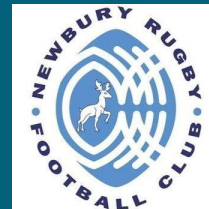
The Club will be open 'til late so come along to meet up ahead of the new season.

Other Lions fixtures showing in the Kickers:

- **Sat 31st July** – Lions vs South Africa – Test 2
- **Sat 7th August** – Lions vs South Africa - Test 3

BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

WHAT'S ON AT NRFC



SUMMER TRAINING SCHEDULE

Minis:

9.30 to 11.00 am, 11th and 25th July; no training through August. Training resumes on 5th Sept.

Juniors:

U12(13) 11th and 25th July, then TBA.

U13(14) alternate Wednesdays (21st July, 4th Aug, 18th Aug, 1st Sept).

U14(15) Wednesdays through June and July; no training through August; Training resumes in Sept.

U15(16) Pre-season training on Fridays and Sundays, from 1st August.

Girls:

U13/U15 intend to meet for non-rugby activity on Tuesdays, eg, rounders.

Touch rugby:

To continue throughout July and August on Mondays and Saturdays.

Senior men:

Tuesday 6th July – regular pre-season training commences (Tues & Thurs).

Saturday 7th Aug – Pre-season friendly away @ Eastleigh - details TBC.

Saturday 14th Aug – Possible's v Probable's @ NRFC - details TBC

Saturday 21st Aug – Pre-season friendly away @ Wimbledon - details TBC.



SUMMER GROUND WORKS

Pitch sanding work took place in June. Ralph Grove has requested that Pitch 1 is rested as much as possible and ALL activities should utilise the top pitches whenever they are available. Please enquire with Ralph Grove PRIOR TO any unscheduled event.

SENIOR FIXTURES BEGIN

BLUES

04 Sep - Blues v Grove (A)

11 Sep - Blues v Witney (A)

18 Sep - Blues v Marlborough (H)

25 Sep - Blues v Oxford (A)

02 Oct - Blues v Sherborne (H)

[\(Full fixture list on pg13\)](#)

WOMENS

26 Sep - Newbury Ladies v Guildford Gazelles Ladies (A)

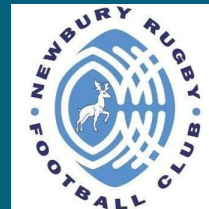
03 Oct - Newbury Ladies v Ivybridge Women (H)

[\(Full fixture list on the club website\)](#)



BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT



The feel good factor was palpable. Strangers actually talked and joked with each other on public transport. There was a wow factor in the anticipation and the national self indulgence on the night of the opening ceremony was up there with anything witnessed for many years. Seventeen year old decathlete, Desiree Henry took a leading role that night being one of the seven young sporting hopefuls nominated to light the Olympic flame in London in 2012. Experts predicted a glittering sporting future for Desiree and she has not disappointed. Relay bronze at Rio in 2016 was followed by relay silver at the 2017 World Athletics Championships in London, and counting.

Youth development. Sporting bodies, ignore this at your peril. Athletics seems to have it, but what about rugby? How are our future stars developed, nurtured, encouraged to reach their full potential. All our senior coaches are involved in developing promising young players; Paul Archer, Neil Hunter and James McAvoy at London Irish player development programme and Ross Newton at Wasps player development programme. James is the Development Pathway coach at U13-15 and is the London Irish programme assessor for the Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence. Paul has supported England student 7's and Samurai Development (Bulldogs) which has directly passed players



PAUL ARCHER & JAMES MCAVOY

onto the England 7's programme. This article will give some insight to the London Irish Player Development Pathway. This is relevant as a large number of our junior boys are involved. We are also involved with the Wasps Centre of Excellence and the aim is to enrol some of our U18 girls next year. This is the pathway for girls from grass roots to Premiership and International rugby. Wasps are engaging with a number of the home counties to give girls this opportunity.

The pathway at London Irish works on a bronze, silver and gold premise. Bronze begins at U13 and a wide range of players are invited to access coaching across multiple sites in Berkshire, Hampshire and Buckinghamshire. From this point players can progress to silver and gold standard. These are not open access. The decision of who to invite to this level is made by the London Irish Academy coaches and managers through ongoing assessments and trials. A large number of professional rugby players go through the academy system of one or other of the Premiership clubs but as a previous article written about Ruairidh McConnochie has shown, this is not the exclusive pathway to professional rugby.

As always with young players, one of the main issues is overplaying and all coaches and managers are fully aware of this. This can be particularly acute if young players are chosen to play county rugby in addition to school and club rugby. As they progress through the age groups, each player will play for their home club and school and will be observed by coaches and managers. At the silver/gold level they will then play for London Irish U16's and U18's and if they are deemed good enough will be given an Academy contract.

The training at London Irish Player Development Pathway is based on London Irish playing principles and sessions are structured on a tactical periodisation approach to incorporate all of these principles throughout the season. A "typical" training session will consist of skill development sessions, conditioned touch using the playing principles, contact development skills and strength and conditioning including rehab and prehab.

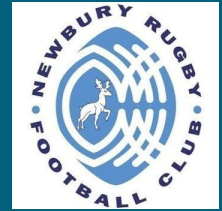
Seeing young people develop their skills and talents and having some small input to this is one of the most rewarding activities anyone can be involved with. Realistically, few will make a living out of rugby but that is not important. What is important is that they are given the opportunity to develop their skills to the best of their ability and enjoy whatever sport in which they are engaged.

If she's there keep a look out for Desiree at Tokyo later this summer and also keep a look out for that one person on the London Underground who is still prepared to say hello to strangers....

BRIAN LEE

BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE AT THE CLUB



If you are interested in any of the following 'paid' roles at the Club, please email a letter of application and CV to [Rob Harris](#)

Experienced Cook

The club is looking to recruit an experienced cook to service our Venue Hire and Rugby events during the season.

Part-time Marketing Role

To promote the commercial business at the club and rugby linked events. This is an important and exciting role.

Club Manager

To co-ordinate and oversee all club activities, linking commercial and rugby and reporting to the Management Board and Trustees.

If you would like to enquire about any of the following 'volunteer' roles, please contact [Ian West](#), Volunteer coordinator, or [David Jones](#). Every little bit helps so please do what you can.

Events Co-ordinator

Help co-ordinate Events within the club, working as a team for social and fundraising activities.

Newsletter Writers and Contributors

Some additional support in compiling the monthly newsletter would be appreciated.

General volunteers

To help on the gate and with carparking on match days and lots of unsung jobs around the club - 2 hours a month or when you can ?

Coordinate the history of the club

to help co-ordinate all the historical memorabilia of the club - 4 to 8 hours.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU!!

SIMPLE WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR CLUB

**PAY YOUR
CLUB MEMBERSHIP**

**SPONSORSHIP
Contact Richard Deal**

**CLUB EVENTS
Details posted on Pitchero**

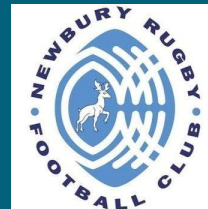
**LATEST
GOOD EXCHANGE PROJECT**

**FOR ALL THE LATEST
CLUB NEWS**

100+ CLUB

BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

SUMMER MULTI-SPORTS CAMP / SPONSORSHIP



blues rugby coaching

SUMMER MULTI-SPORTS CAMP FOR CHILDREN 8-14

WHERE: MONKS LANE, NEWBURY

WHEN: 2nd - 6th AUGUST, 9.30AM TO 4.30PM

HOW MUCH: £180 FOR THE WEEK, £50 PER DAY

CONTACT: bluesrugbycoaching@outlook.com

REGISTER HERE:



<https://bit.ly/3zmNBMH>



Free Career Consultation with Suzanna Adams of Varnium.

Let's make some positive career decisions, YES even in lockdown!!!

Looking for career opportunities? Perhaps you have just left School, College or University or maybe you are already working but you feel there could be something more inspiring and challenging out there for you?

Why not contact **Suzanna Adams of Varnium** for a conversation on where your future could take you.

Suzanna Adams - Recruitment Consultant Tel: 07392 842606 www.varnium.com



SIMUL MOVERE

Geoff Fisher is providing **fruit and vegetable boxes** for collection from their Hambridge Lane depot. Order online on the Fishers of Newbury website. Geoff has also been making weekly fruit and veg donations to NHS staff at Newbury Hospital.

West Berkshire Council's **Community Support Hub** is available to help anyone in need. Anyone needing support from the Community Support Hub can email WestBerkshire@public.govdelivery.com.

SPONSORSHIP HEADLINE

We are delighted to welcome Robin Varley and Phil Davies who have volunteered to help with securing Sponsorship at the club next year.

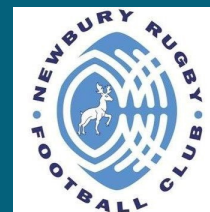
Huge thanks to Richard Deal who has done a sterling job in structuring and stabilising our Sponsorship in the last few years and will still be active in helping them and advising on property matters for NRFC.

More volunteers are always welcome!!

David Jones

BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

COACH'S CORNER - NIKI PATON



It's an indication of the success of the senior women's teams that for next season a new Assistant Head Coach role has been created and taking up this position is Niki Paton who says, "I can't wait to get going". Niki has been at the club for 8 years and played across the back line. She decided to retire from playing at the end of what she calls, "the Covid season" although prior to this in 2018 she ruptured an ACL and this led to her getting involved with helping out with the women's team rather than playing. It seemed a natural progression to continue with coaching at the end of her playing days and she is heavily involved with the U18 girls making sure their transition from U15 to U18 is as smooth as it can be, as well as ensuring a smooth transition from U18 to senior rugby.

Transition features a lot in this edition of the newsletter and it is fitting that the last of the newsletters in its current format concentrates on looking forward and the development of our young talented players. The club is absolutely committed to youth development and this is reflected in the male section of the club as well with the colts now joining the senior men on their training nights. There is nothing more exciting than seeing a young talented player come through to make their senior debut.

Born in that great rugby city Bristol, Niki spent the first 6 years of her life in Hong Kong and Taiwan. On moving back to the UK with her family Niki played hockey at school and also for Thames Valley. She says there was simply no opportunity for her to play rugby as a young girl at school and her first encounter with the game as a player was at Plymouth University where immediately she was hooked on the game. "I love the principles of the game and how you can walk into any rugby club in the world and instantly feel you belong." On graduating successfully with a BSc in Maritime Business and Logistics and a masters degree in International Logistics Niki went travelling for a while and now works as a Logistics Manager for a company that manages returns for retailers globally.

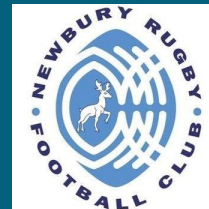
Niki has a Level 1 and Level 2 coaching qualification and she is looking to start her Level 3 qualification next season, mentored by Rhys Davies who has been involved with NRFC for a number of years and who currently works for the RFU on their coach development programmes. Thinking outside the box is a phrase Niki uses to get the best out of every individual and it is likely the skills she has acquired as a Logistics specialist helps in this respect. The attraction of coaching for Niki is seeing the players develop, watching their progression and seeing something planned come to life. As to the future, Niki hopes she can continue making a positive contribution to women and girls' rugby at the club by building and recruiting to, "create a positive team culture and to bridge the gap between the U18 girls and the senior team to ensure their transition is as easy as possible".

My thanks to Niki for providing the information for this article and to wish her all the very best for her new role at the club.

Brian Lee

BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

PERSONAL PROFILES / SUPER SEVENS / JUNIOR UPDATE



SENIOR MEN



HARRY STEVENS

Playing history: Played at St Barts from year 7 to year 13 and at Newbury from U15.

Played everywhere in the backs at some point, even fly half.

Favourite song: Fireflies by Owl City. "How can you not love it?"

Most admired person to invite for dinner: Elon Musk as he is likely to have some good stories and Australian rugby player Nick Cummins for the chat.

Most surprising fact about yourself: Harry has played and coached tennis at a decent level in the past. One of his concerns is what he calls his, "Paper knees that I have injured countless times."

Favourite rugby moment at NRFC: in the Colts when, "I was loaned to Tadley for a half as they didn't have enough people to play, getting a try saver on a teammate from Newbury and earning Man of the Match for them in the process."

CLUB SUPPORTER



DOT YARDLEY

Background: Dot has been involved in sport for a long time. She did a lot of cycling as a young woman, cycling up to 100 miles a day. When her children grew up she took up dinghy sailing at Burghfield Sailing Club and during lockdown Dot did Zoom exercise classes three times a week. She has been watching rugby at NRFC for over 25 years, supporting Blues and in particular her grandson Robbie Drysdale. Dot's husband played at Dulwich College and trialled for Blackheath. The photograph shows Dot with her daughter Liz Drysdale and grand-daughter Claire Evans, smiling because Blues had just beaten Maidenhead away!

Favourite song: Dot has a varied musical taste ranging from Chris Barber's Trad Jazz Band to Queen.

Favourite film: Sound of Music. "My two year old great grand-daughter sings it all the time."

Most admired person to invite for dinner: Matt Dawson. As a keen watcher of Question of Sport, Dot likes a lot of what he has to say.

Favourite rugby moment at NRFC: Watching the promotion game against Clifton a few years ago.

Additional Info: Dot would like to wish all the teams all the very best for next season.



SUPER SEVENS SERIES UK

What a great day of rugby. A tournament involving professional rugby teams of men and women, organised by former Wasps and England winger Tom Varndell; the tournament goes to four venues during June and displays some of the best rising stars in British Rugby.

We also had the honour of watching Mr Radrana of Bristol Bears (the most expensive rugby player in world rugby apparently!), stepping out onto pitch 4 and then playing on the main pitch in the plate final. Yes, the PLATE, not the main final!! To be fair he only played as a substitute and stayed on the wing!!

16 teams featured including Ealing Trailfinders, The Apaches and other specialist 7s teams. This is the third year we have hosted this event and it will be in our diary again for next year. Make sure it's in your diary for next year as it was a great day although it would have been good to see more members there. Those that did come along enjoyed a sunny day, a few beers, bbq food and some impressive 7s from both the men and the women.

Over 800 attended and over £5500 was taken on the day. The 7s organisers were delighted with the efforts of Rob Harris, Leanne and her team for making it run so smoothly, bearing in mind the uncertainty that the event might not take place because of Covid restrictions less than three weeks before. Well done and a big thanks to all those who volunteered and helped on the day.

DAVID JONES

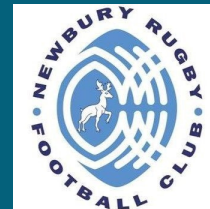
JUNIOR UPDATE

Great to see the Sunday skills sessions that Paul Archer has been delivering so well supported. They have been fantastic and the players have loved them! **Nick Spain**



BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

THE ORIGINS OF MINIS & JUNIORS AT NRFC



"I remember seeing the Rolling Stones way back in 1965 on Eel Pie Island in Twickenham with only about 200 in the audience. "I saw the Beatles' first gig at the Cavern Club. "I remember seeing Jonathan Joseph playing at Under 11, and he was pretty good back then." On a personal level I have seen none of these but I have been in the company of people who have. There is something very nostalgic about being somewhere, or seeing something or doing something before the actor or band or ballet dancer, or rugby player for that matter becomes famous. To be somewhere at the beginning of something is quite special and to have a hand in his, her or its development is even more special and this month we are going way back to the start of mini and junior rugby at NRFC. Some current members will undoubtedly have vivid memories of those times and now as adults will look back with fondness to their time as minis or juniors at the club.

One such person who looks back with such fondness is Tom Phillips, one of the main architects of Mini and Junior rugby at NRFC. Tom spent 25 years living in Newbury and during this time he was in at the beginning of mini rugby at the club. In at the beginning is an understatement as he was one of the driving forces behind its development, along with Dave Hunter. Tom says, "Steffan Czerpak and John Razzman started the minis but after a year, they stepped aside and this is when I became a lot more actively involved at the club." Tom was simply standing on the touch line watching his son play and like many parents we all know what happened next. This all happened about 50 years ago and from those early beginnings the mini and junior sections have gone from strength to strength. In the minis each age group from U5/6 right up to U12 has between 30 and 40 players and there are new starters all the time across all age groups. There are at least 5 coaches and a manager for each age group. In the juniors all age groups from the U13 to U16 can comfortably field two sides each week, with the U13 having over 60 boys registered. Each junior age group has at least six coaches plus other volunteers such as managers, first aiders etc. What Tom would have given for that back then.

Tom grew up in Dartford and played scrum half for Old Erithians before moving to Newbury to take up a job. After spending close on 25 years in the town he moved to Melsonby in North Yorkshire where he has lived for the past 30 years. Tom's son played for the minis and juniors and that is how Tom initially got into volunteering at the club. Interestingly he says in the early days coaches tended to stay with one age group rather than moving up the age groups with a particular team. There will be differing points of view about this, particularly as volunteers tend to be mums or dads who help out with their son's or daughter's age group. Tom's view is that having a new coach each year helps because it doesn't stereotype a young player as only being suited to one position. Young players develop at different rates and an U13 back row may develop into an outstanding U16 fly half.

In those early days Tom was aware of the need for some rapid coach development programme and he worked tirelessly with the RFU to ensure this happened in a timely fashion. He was grateful for the help of a dedicated group of parents and for the support of schools who Tom worked with to recruit young players by holding mini rugby festivals. A significant day was when 100 boys attended an event organised by Tom at Bulmershe College in Reading. This was sponsored by what was then Radio 210, the RFU and the Bristol and West Building Society. In attendance that day was ex England international Don Rutherford who was the first Technical Director at the RFU and Chalkie White, who had a successful coaching career with Leicester Tigers in the late 1970's and early 1980's and who then went on to become South West Divisional Technical Administrator.

Tom recounts a few instances whilst he was at NRFC which he remembers with a great deal of pride. The first, two young lads who were in Tom's words, "Tearaways". He was told he would not be able to do anything with them but as time went on they began to learn self restraint. On one occasion one of these lads was hit by an opposition team member but decided not to retaliate, which would not have been the case at the start of his rugby career. The young lad was beginning to absorb the rugby ethos. Another instance was when Tom was coaching the Stags and before his last game in charge of the team Skippy, who was then captain said, "Let's go out and do it for Tom." He was quite moved by this sentiment.

As a club we can all be very grateful to Tom for his pioneering work with our mini and junior sections. There is no doubt it has gone from strength to strength over the years and it is down to people like Tom and countless others who give of their time freely and without question to ensure young people continue to have the opportunity to play rugby at the club and who knows in 10 or 15 years time when one of our current minis or juniors runs out for his first international cap, we may be saying, "Do you know I saw him playing when he was in the U14's."

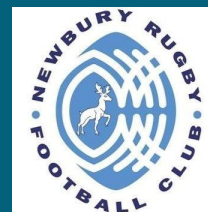
My thanks to Tom for giving his time to contribute to this article and here's to his next visit to Newbury where I shall be urging anyone with any influence to treat him as a VIP and to at least buy him one glass of beer.



BRIAN LEE

Tom Phillips

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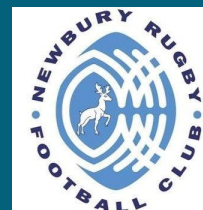
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BLUES NEWS - KEEPING IN TOUCH

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2021-22 SEASON
SOUTH WEST 1 EAST
PROVISIONAL
FIXTURE LIST

04-Sep	Grove	(A)	18-Dec	Witney	(H)
11-Sep	Witney	(A)	08-Jan	Marlborough	(A)
18-Sep	Marlborough	(H)	15-Jan	Oxford Harlequins	(H)
25-Sep	Oxford Harlequins	(A)	22-Jan	Sherborne	(A)
02-Oct	Sherborne	(H)	29-Jan	Trowbridge	(H)
09-Oct	Trowbridge	(A)	12-Feb	Windsor	(A)
23-Oct	Windsor	(H)	19-Feb	Banbury	(H)
30-Oct	Banbury	(A)	05-Mar	Beaconsfield	(A)
06-Nov	Beaconsfield	(H)	12-Mar	Bracknell	(H)
20-Nov	Bracknell	(A)	26-Mar	Buckingham	(A)
27-Nov	Buckingham	(H)	02-Apr	Chippenham	(H)
04-Dec	Chippenham	(A)	09-Apr	Frome	(A)
11-Dec	Frome	(H)	23-Apr	Grove	(H)

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South West 1 East 2021-22 (PROVISIONAL)

Banbury	<u>Bodicote Park, Oxford Road, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxfordshire</u>	OX15 4AF
Beaconsfield	Oak Lodge Meadow, Windsor End, Beaconsfield, Bucks.	HP9 2SQ
Bracknell	Lily Hill Park, Lily Hill Drive, Bracknell, Berkshire	RG12 2UG
Buckingham	Floyd Field, Maids Moreton, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire	MK18 1RF
Chippenham	Allington Fields, <u>Frogwell</u> , Chippenham, Wiltshire	SN14 0YZ
Frome	The Clubhouse, Gypsy Lane, Frome, Somerset	BA11 2NA
Grove	Recreation Ground, Cane Lane, Grove, Wantage, Oxfordshire	OX12 0FL
Marlborough	The Common, Frees Avenue, Marlborough, Wiltshire	SN8 1DL
Newbury Blues	Monks Lane, Newbury, Berkshire	RG14 7RW
Oxford Harlequins	Marston Ferry Road, Oxford, Oxfordshire	OX2 7EE
Sherborne	The Terrace Playing Fields, Gainsborough Park, Sherborne, Dorset	DT9 5NS
Trowbridge	<u>Paxcroft</u> , Hilperton, Trowbridge, Wiltshire	BA14 6JB
Windsor	Home Park, Datchet Road, Windsor, Berkshire	SL4 6HX
Witney	Hailey Road, Witney, Oxfordshire	OX29 9UH