

# BOGNOR RFC NEWSLETTER

## APRIL 2023



It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to a true legend of the club - Martin Eley. As well as being a Vice-President and Honorary Life Member, Martin was one of the original Trustees when we moved to Hampshire Avenue in 1985. He joined the Bognor Regis School in 1970 and he immediately immersed himself in the local community, taking a lead role in many major projects such as the Sports Council and the Saint Maur Twinning Association.

However, it is for his contribution to rugby that he will be best remembered. For two and a half decades he was responsible, both directly and indirectly, for providing a conveyor belt of rugby players who enjoyed success at school and went on to play for Bognor. Many of these players have since seen their children and even grandchildren follow in their footsteps.

Having originally played for Bath, Martin initially joined Worthing but, in 1972, he transferred his allegiance to Bognor and spent many years in the 1<sup>st</sup> XV before moving down through the sides to help bring on the younger players.

His qualities of organisation and enthusiasm have always been an example to us all. We are truly indebted to him for his contribution as a player, coach and chairman, but most of all for his integrity, loyalty and friendship.

Our love and thoughts go to his beloved wife Tessa, his three children Matthew, Libby and Hannah, and his three grandchildren.

His funeral will be at midday on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> April at Worthing Crematorium and afterwards at Middleton Sports Club.

# RUGBY ROUNDUP

## BOGNOR RFC 1<sup>st</sup> XV SQUAD 2022-23



**Back row:** Karl Flinn (Head Coach), Chris Webb, Shaun Bailey, Dan Robson, Josh Burgess, Charlie Jays, Jack Lysaght, Elvis Millen, Ollie Fuller, Jamie Foote, Darren Bidwell, Paddy Burnett (Asst. Coach), Paul Mitchell (Asst. Coach).

**Front Row:** Richie Hay (Team Manager), Russ Watmore, Joe Benjamin, Charlie Weller, Sam Newcombe, Shane Stevens (Capt.), Jack Hornibrook, Chris Hay, Jeremy Newton-Young, Nick Baker (Asst. Coach)

Bognor's 1<sup>st</sup> Team had an outstanding season and were in the top three of Hampshire Counties 2 from start to finish. Head Coach Karl Flinn took every opportunity to involve the talented Colts at his disposal and the tactic paid off as his young side clinched promotion to Hampshire 1 in the very last game of the season.

Results: P20 W16 L4 Points For 768 Points Against 266 Total League Points 82

We can all now look forward to renewing acquaintances next season with old foes such as Portsmouth, Gosport & Fareham, Eastleigh and Trojans. As an added bonus Chichester have agreed to reinstate a 1<sup>st</sup> Team fixture when we will play them at Bognor for the Sausage Cup. (Date to be confirmed.)

### 2<sup>nd</sup> XV

As with most other clubs it's been a tough year for our 2s and we've struggled on occasions to raise a side when travelling away, especially when the Colts have had a fixture the following day. Captain Mitch Brock has battled away and there have been some notable performances against other 1<sup>st</sup> XV's. Next season several Colts will be moving up to senior rugby on a permanent basis and we are confident that both our 1s and 2s will benefit as a result.

It was a frustrating year for colts league rugby in Hampshire with a number of teams



dropping out, resulting in less competitive fixtures. However, we made a great start to the league campaign, sitting on top of Division 1 at the halfway mark. At this point more senior colts were needed to bolster the 1s and 2s , and this eventually took its toll on the colts' league campaign. Nevertheless there were many positives:

- we are the first Bognor Colts team to play in Division 1
- we held our first Transition Evening in January (see photo above) to celebrate seventeen players signing senior forms, each player being presented with a personalised kitbag and certificate.
- eight players played for the 1<sup>st</sup> XV and made a huge contribution to our successful promotion campaign.



# U16 GIRLS

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The Flamingos (above) enjoyed their first season of league rugby and they won all seven matches with maximum points. Captained by Lily Smith, the squad increased from just twelve players at the start of the season to a healthy seventeen by the end. Having travelled all over Hampshire and Berkshire they will meet Reading Abbey in the final on 23<sup>rd</sup> April.

Whatever the result it has been a great season for the girls and they have been improving their individual and team skills week on week.

## MINIS

We are delighted to note that all sections now come under one umbrella, meaning that the finances can be used for the benefit of all, from the age of six through to our most senior of members.

The Mini Section remains as strong as ever and a recent flyer to local schools ensured that they were still recruiting players, even near the end of the season.

Their strength was epitomised in March when, despite the wet pitches, they played host to Twickenham at age-levels from U-6 to U-11. The visitors made a particular point of thanking Bognor for the wonderful hospitality they received both on and off the field.

By the time the next Newsletter is out in September, recruitment for next season will be in full swing. So, spread the word: for a friendly welcome, no matter what the age, come to Bognor RFC.

## JUNIORS



The U-12s adjusted well to the transition from mini to junior rugby whilst the U-14 grew in strength as the season progressed.

The U-16s attracted players from other local clubs and this enabled them to finish the season strongly and beat Romsey in the Hampshire Trophy Final. Pictured above is the winning squad.

Things are definitely looking healthy in the junior section and our thanks go to all of the coaches, as well as to April and Jez Hanks for their work finances and registration.

## VICE-PRESIDENTS

Despite the most difficult of economic times our Vice-Presidents have remained steadfast in their support and have once again contributed approximately £10,000 towards the maintenance and development of our great club. I am so proud to be your President and I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

## CLUBHOUSE EXTENSION

As I write this, the much-needed extension to the changing rooms and showers is well under way and will be complete before the start of next season. We will have used up all of the grants and donations we have received, together with the majority of our savings, but we are certain that the end result will be worth it, benefiting all sections of the Club, but particularly the juniors and girls.

We are indebted to our main sponsor, Dave Wolfenden of Heatload, for their generosity above and beyond their agreed sponsorship. We are still, even at this late stage, exploring all avenues of support so that the project can be furnished to the highest specification. No doubt we will also be calling on members to add the finishing touches during the summer.





Our second annual commemorative match had to be postponed from September, due to rock-hard pitches, until the end of the season. A large crowd again turned out to celebrate the massive contributions made to Bognor RFC over many decades by Phil and Dick and they would have been very proud to see the number of players, both old and young, who were determined to take part.

The match was refereed superbly by Jack Tompkins and the photo shows the victorious President's XV captain Nigel Mitchell receiving the trophy from Anne and Wendy. The tally now stands at one win apiece so the next encounter (September 2024) should be interesting!

## VOLUNTEERS

The reason that we continue to flourish as a club is due largely to the fact that we are blessed with a wonderful team of volunteers who put in countless hours for no financial reward. I'm talking about coaches, medical staff, ground staff, committee members and, of course, bar staff. It is the latter category that remains the lifeblood of the club in terms of income but, unfortunately, it is also the area in which we are struggling the most for volunteers. Mike Lewin and his small team continue to graft away but we really need to recruit some newcomers to ease the burden on the old-timers. So, if you can offer any assistance at all, even if it's only two or three times during the season, please contact Mike and he'll ensure that you receive training before allocating times and dates to suit you.

## JW SPORTS

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I'm delighted to announce that we have recently signed a three-year deal with JW Sports to supply all of our team and leisure kit, as from this coming September. John Woosley has always had a positive relationship with schools and clubs in the community and I have no hesitation in recommending him- I'm sure that switching to a local supplier will bring mutual benefit for many years to come.

## NEW MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

We pride ourselves in always having been one of the cheapest community clubs in the south of England and we have held our current subscription rates for many years. Unfortunately, however, increases in heating, ground maintenance, food etc mean that we have had to increase most of our subscriptions from September 2023. The new rates are:

Senior Players: £20 per month

Senior Social: £6 per month or £70 per year

First child: £70 per year ( Associate Membership included for parents)

Family of two: £90 per year

Family of three: £100 per year

Colts: £70

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

April 25 The third Singsong Supper at the Pink Pub. Four places left- contact me if interested.

April 28 Annual Club Supper. Tickets £20 from Tom O'Brien (Full list of awards winners will appear in September's Newsletter).

April 30 1.30p.m. Taster Day for Women's Rugby at BRFC

July 14 7p.m. BRFC AGM

August 26 Dinner Dance at BRFC (Maximum 70 people). Tickets from Faye Flinn £30

May 2 2024 Senior Tour to Italy- watch this space

With best wishes to you all.

Leighton Thomas