

# In Touch



The Official Newsletter of **COVENTRY RUGBY SUPPORTERS' CLUB** Issue 13 April 2021

Honorary Members: Harry Walker (1915-2018) & Ted Wainwright



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## FROM THE CHAIR...



As the clocks have just gone forward into British Summer Time, rather strangely, we look back! A year to forget in terms of watching Coventry Rugby and my thoughts and

condolences to anyone who has suffered a loss during the pandemic. Difficult to believe that the away win at Doncaster Knights in March 2020 would be the season closer. But, it was.

Moving forward to March 2021 and we are

treading carefully out of the sporting desert. A curtailed Greene King IPA Championship is now underway, 10 games for 11 teams, London Scottish opting out, and plenty of positives to be found, despite matches being played without, and God how I miss this, spectators or crowds. The provision of the live-streaming, I have enjoyed and, touch wood, I have had no problems or technical issues. Long may this continue. It's here I have to say that the club do get money from it, it's provided by the RFU, but clubs do benefit. I think the bottom line is, the more people watch, the bigger the take.

On the Cov playing front, at the time of writing, a narrow home win against Bedford Blues, a narrow loss at Doncaster, a valiant comeback just falling short and, by general



opinion, an excellent first 40 against Ealing Trailfinders, before the visitors turned on the second half power for a convincing win.

For me, Trailfinders are a serious prospect to beat Saracens to that promotion spot. It promises to be an exciting and interesting battle.

And for Cov? Well, I have seen nothing to suggest Cov have anything to stress about. By consensus, most of us knew that the undoubted progress of the past few years would come to a halt. The pandemic situation was a catastrophe for the club. Plans, and vital plans for development, have had to be put on hold. Necessarily so. The survival of the club was at stake. The club will survive.

Difficult situations have been faced before and overcome. They will be again.

For me, whenever that special day comes, the reopening of the game to spectators, you will find me in a bar area. Come and have an 'arm bump', say hello and think of happier days ahead.

Let's talk rugby, of shared experiences, of special days past and special days, or dreams, not yet shared. But, most of all, together .

All the best

*Paul Ingleston*

Chair

Coventry Rugby Supporters' Club

## SAD FAREWELLS

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Recently Coventry Rugby said farewell to these members of the Cov family, John Barton, Fred Gulliver and Tony Dickinson.

Lock John played 265 times for Coventry, also representing the Barbarians, Warwickshire and The Midlands. Capped four times by England, John also scored two tries against Wales in 1967. He recalled being tasked to play opposite Willie John McBride against Ireland at Lansdowne Road. John saw little of the ball that afternoon and spent the whole game tackling the great man instead. England won that day – job well done John. Following retirement, John was Fixtures Secretary for Coventry for a number of years in the 1980's.

John passed away on January 12th.

Fred Gulliver was father of Tony and grandfather to Ben. Along with his wife Pat, the quiet spoken Fred followed his sons progress throughout Tony's career and later still supported his grandson during his career at Coventry. A keen motor bike enthusiast and marathon runner, Fred would always take up position at the school end at Coundon Road and later at the railway end at BPA.

Fred passed away on January 23rd

Tony Dickinson was a true Coventry supporter. Together with wife, Iris, Tony looked after the Coundon Road Supporters shop for a long time and was also on the Coventry Supporters committee, offering valued service at this time. An avid photographer, Tony was a familiar sight on the Coundon Road pitch sidelines offering his own insight and style into the on-pitch play. Some of Tony's photographs are now appearing on the MAJESTIC COV, ONCE THE KINGS OF RUGBY, Facebook page.

Tony passed away peacefully on January 30<sup>th</sup>.



# MAJESTIC COV

ONCE THE KINGS OF ENGLISH RUGBY



**STEVE "SCRIBBLE" EVANS**

With contributions by:

Simon Maisey, Alan Joseph, John Butler, John Lamb,  
John Wilkinson, Michael Austin, Brendan Gallagher, Darrell Giles

Due for release in September, this fascinating look into Cov's rich playing heritage and history is sure to make a big impact.

Jointly being compiled by Alan Joseph, Simon Maisey and the energetic efforts of Steve 'Scribble' Evans, it promises a trip down memory lane, a look back at the Coventry RFC story and the impact on the English game

There are also contributions from our local rugby journalists , John Lamb, John Wilkinson, John Butler, Darrell Giles, Michael Austin, together with Brendan Gallagher.

Rich in stories, laughs and memories this book will soon be able to be pre-ordered ahead of its release date.

The book will be available in hardback, £13.95 and in paperback, £10.95.

Get ready to pre-order your copy soon.



# ADAM PETERS Club Captain

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I don't think any of us could have imagined that only now, a full year since the Championship Rugby 2019/2020 season ended prematurely, teams would be getting back onto the pitch. We ended last season in a very creditable 4th position with a lot of positives to build on for 2020/21 and an opportunity to continue to build a squad capable of competing at the top of the table.

We would usually have time off in May and June before returning to training in July to prepare for the season ahead of starting in September. Through borrowing club

equipment, we were able to turn our living rooms into 'home gyms'. However, we were not back in training until October 2020 at the Club in very different conditions - masks, sanitiser and bubbles have now become the norm.

The news came just before Christmas that we would start the 2020/21 season on 6th March, so there was some light at the end of the tunnel, and we had something to prepare for as a Club. Pre-season fixtures were organised, and team pitch sessions commenced. It was great to be back at the club, training and in the gym with the team. Far better to be surrounded by players and coaches, enjoying each-others company again.

We have certainly been disappointed by the lack of financial support from the RFU. Cov is a special club and is fortunate to have Jon Sharp fully behind it. Along with the supporters, who helped us to raise money through crowdfunding to ensure that we could continue. In recent weeks, the profile of the Championship has been raised and more people are taking note following Saracens defeat by Cornish Pirates. Hopefully, such coverage will continue to aid the plight of the second tier of rugby.

The management team and coaches have been towers of strength through all of this. At the same time, we have had new players join a smaller squad and they have integrated well. Now we are back into the season and it really is very different. It has never been an issue to get motivated for a game but running out to an empty Butts Park without our fans is a strange experience.

We are a determined, young team who are learning from each other. It is great to have the experience of the other senior players and we are certainly growing week after week. We work well together and know that this is a season where every game is a cup final and we need to continue to improve our performances.

We saw what we are capable of with the first half against Ealing, but we know that we need to produce that performance for 80 minutes. We are all excited about the future, not only for this season but beyond. We are building at Cov and want to be back amongst the top tier. I am very proud to be the Club captain and although our progress has been hampered by Coronavirus it has also made us stronger, more united and even more determined to get back to where we belong.



# JUNIOR BULUMAKAU

## Well on the Road to Recovery



Thirteen months ago, Pte Jonasa (Junior) Bulumakau (3rd Battalion, Royal Scots Borderers, The Black Watch) was all set for a big year. A try scorer in the 2019 Army Navy match, Pte Bulumakau had also helped Coventry Rugby achieve a sixth-place finish in The Championship, a then-record for a newly promoted club in the league.

With a later start to the 2019/20 Championship due to the Rugby World Cup, Coventry had begun their campaign with three Championship Cup clashes with Ampthill, Bedford and Ealing Trailfinders.

The third of these was a Butts Park classic which went down to the wire. Unfortunately, it also marked the beginning of what would go on to be a harrowing journey through a knee injury which would not just rule out his season, but put his overall health in grave harm.

Initially the first operation went well, only for things to take a nasty turn going into Christmas, with an infection which required over 20 litres of liquid to be flushed out of the knee and put Pte Bulumakau's life in danger.

"Before I went in to my six-week check-up I was up all night with my body fighting something," he explains. "Part of me wanted to go to sleep but part of me forced myself to stay awake, even though I was sweating through my hoodie and t-shirt. And as it turned out had I fallen asleep that night I might not have woken up, it was that serious.

"I was told by the doctor that my bloods weren't normal and that my leg could have been amputated, and that to catch the infection at the time that I did was crucial.

"The whole experience means that I'm taking every day as it comes with the next challenge. Life is an open book and I'm enjoying every single moment."

Throw into the mix another operation to manipulate the knee in February and then lockdown restricting access to in-person physio treatment and you have a year to remember for all the wrong reasons on their own.

But this was all compounded by the funding challenges faced by all the Championship clubs, and the news that Pte Bulumakau was not going to be having his contract renewed by Coventry.

This has meant a return to day-to-day Army life for the first time in nearly a decade and a move to Inverness to join up full-time with 3 Scots The Black Watch at Fort George.



# JUNIOR BULUMAKAU cont...

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“The Army’s been there 100 percent there with me playing rugby and helping me out with my family if rugby doesn’t go any further,” Pte Bulumakau says. “They’ve welcomed me, my wife and our two kids with open arms.

“I totally understand why Coventry were not able to offer me a contract due to the financial situation, so I made the choice as a husband and a father to make the move to Scotland.

“The kids are loving it with the new school and my wife is finding Inverness beautiful. It’s a totally different world and I’m loving every single moment of it. The kids are already speaking with Scottish accents!

“The biggest change coming back into the Army is that I’m going back into basics and square one. I’m just a normal Private soldier, I don’t want to be treated differently because of my rugby. I will do what I’m told, and even though I’ve done 11 years I’m still the same rank as others and don’t want to be treated any differently. Knowing how to approach others, how to talk to others, how to respect the basics, such as saluting an officer, which I’ve not had to do for the last seven years!”

The 29-year-old winger has been a professional player for five years, playing at Glasgow Warriors, Doncaster Knights and Coventry, as well as turning out for Bath in the Premiership Rugby Sevens Series.

He might also have been man of the match in the 2015 Army Navy match and a regular in red throughout that time, but there are no assumptions that he will be a part of Capt Mal Roberts’ squad whenever Army rugby resumes in earnest.

“My only aim at the moment when rugby comes back is just to get back to basics,” he says. “I’ll obviously be nervous because it’s been so long since I’ve played and I want to get back into normal. It’s all about getting back into the gym or on my bike, so there’s nothing to stop me going forward either getting back into the Army career or rugby career.”

In the meantime, Pte Bulumakau has been passing on some of his experience with players in the local area around Inverness.

“I’ve been doing some coaching with the Highlands Rugby, helping out and speaking to the younger boys. I want to give something back and help them achieve their dreams. I never dreamt I could be a professional, so for them to approach me is an honour.”

The Army Senior Men’s XV had their final game before the lockdown at Butts Park Arena, and while Pte Bulumakau was not part of either squad that day he is hoping that there might be an opportunity for him to return to the Midlands to say a proper goodbye to the Coventry supporters.

“It’s a family club and a fans club, and I had fans message me and be in contact with me to follow up how I was doing in my rehab,” he says. “Andy Hemming, one of the club physios, was helping me during my rehab, even visiting me in hospital over Christmas, which I found very touching because people would normally be with their family and friends. I was at my lowest point then and he helped me get through it.

“I’m sorry that I wasn’t able to say goodbye to them in person, and hopefully I’ll be able to play at Butts Park again with the Army.”



# COVENTRY RUGBY'S PARTNERSHIP WITH MOULTON COLLEGE



The link-up between Coventry Rugby and Moulton College continues to thrive, bringing benefits to all parties, with hopes for sustained success, Louis James, the latest example of this collaboration.

We asked Moulton College's Head of Rugby, Phil Powell, for his assessment of the tie-up and his view of the benefits to be seen.....'

"Since launching the partnership with Coventry Rugby club, our sole focus has been to provide an academic support to producing academy players for the first team. Over the past couple of years we have seen a long line of students leave our Rugby programme and become academy players and to, likewise, progress on to represent the 1st team. It was the right fit for our students to be in such a supportive program with Coventry, both Ross Stewart and Rowland Winter understand the value in which the college can bring being aligned with the club.

So, not only do we see the increase in a development opportunity for our players but the full support to collaborate and to support each other and grow. Rowland has a strong vision for the club which was the perfect time for us to be part of the journey and to support them by providing an academic pathway from 16 – 23.

What the club is trying to do with providing local players in both Warwickshire and East Midlands, a dual career aspect is vital and, with the support from the college management team, together with our Principal having links to the city of Coventry,



## COVENTRY RUGBY'S PARTNERSHIP WITH MOULTON COLLEGE cont...

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she saw the value in associating the college programme with such a forward thinking club.

Having known both Rowland and Ross, I have the utmost respect in what they are both doing and achieving and for me, personally, joining the journey with them to help support the club was something I wanted to do. The partnership is constantly evolving for the better which is great and Ross likes to keep me on my toes with new ideas, or problems to help solve. But, for me, the main and only focus is giving the players more opportunities. Having the likes of Ross and Pete White coming in to support the coaching programme, you are not going to get a better opportunity as a player, to work with such quality. Likewise, for me, it keeps pushing me as a coach bouncing ideas off them.

Where do I see the programme growing? This collaboration with Coventry is massive, but we are also in the process of offering more which will support our unique partnership and set the Club/College programme apart from any other. With the players, considering the year we have had, loving and thriving from the first phase of the partnership, they are looking for the next steps and are also fully invested in the opportunities this partnership has with Coventry. This is the exciting part for me, with the launch of our Uni programme adding to the current U18 provision we provide making the first steps.

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**2021 CLUB MEMBER**



# PROJECT 500 UPDATE FROM HAL SPARKE



## FUNDED IN 2020 BY



2020 was difficult, but 2021 hasn't been a walk in the park either. No competitive rugby at the Butts Park Arena now for a year, and its return will be accompanied only by empty stands rather than the 2,000-strong Coventry Rugby community we look forward to seeing so much.

A lack of action on the pitch however, has not spelled a lack of action off it. The past year has seen an array of challenges in the local area, and the Coventry Rugby Community team have been working hard to ensure that we are able to meet many of them.

Due to social distancing guidelines, the new year saw us having to leave our work with Sherbourne Fields school, as well as reduce activities with others such as St Lawrence Primary, Southam. What work we were still able to do in getting their pupils active was highly praise, as evidenced by Head Teacher, John Brine: 'The club has consistently sent the highest quality of staff who are passionate about sport, connect with the children and staff, and most definitely raise the profile of rugby and physical education in the school! Our children quite literally look up to the guys who coach them and share their love of sport, lockdown or otherwise'. 'For those children unable to attend school, we ran a book bank, receiving an incredible number, all kindly donated by fans and locals including Coventry North MP Taiwo Owatemi.'

The pandemic saw uncertainty, and the amplification of social issues facing so many in Coventry. Since October, we have ran two Project:500 camps for disadvantaged children, a free activity week for children from families who may struggle to give them those kind of opportunities, thus tackling health inequalities and barrier to access quality sport and exercise in the city. From the Christmas holidays, we also launched the additional provision of Feed:500, where the families of children attending the Project camps can also receive a week's worth of food in a parcel supplied by our friends at Morrison's Holyhead



# PROJECT 500 UPDATE cont...



Road. Even in February, without the ability to run an activity camp, we still provided over 40 families with a week's worth of shopping, cleaning products from local company Mirius, and Morrison's Savings Stamps to help them save money on their next shop as well.

We're so grateful to all of those who have supported this project, including the Supporter's Club contribution via our Community Crowdfunder earlier in the season.

In the new year that is 2021, we have also seen the launch of Nelly's RFC – a new mixed ability sports club welcoming children with behavioural and learning disabilities to the Butts Park Arena every Wednesday night. In addition to this, with conditions improving, we will also see the launch of our Walking Rugby project for over 35s as well as the resumption of our newly branded Wheelchair Rugby team: The Coventry Stampede, who are now equipped with three more specialised chairs, courtesy of funding from Wooden Spoon'.

Project:500 is back this April! With this project, the Coventry Rugby Foundation has been offering disadvantaged children from Coventry the opportunity to get active and enjoy nutritious meals during the school holidays, which was achieved even during the pandemic when it expanded to Feed:500

Our work as a club in our city can only happen with the support and integration with those within our local communities, so if there is ever a time you wish to volunteer with us, become a patron of the Foundation, or if there is something you believe we can explore to help out in Coventry in any way, get in touch with us at: [community@coventryrugby.co.uk](mailto:community@coventryrugby.co.uk)





# COVENTRY'S BRITISH & IRISH LIONS



The history of the British & Irish Lions stretches all the way back to 1888 and for Coventry the relationship with the most famous touring team of all is almost as long.

There have been ten players who have travelled with the Lions while playing for Coventry, not to mention a few others who have played for both teams but not at the same time.

It all began in 1899, when **W Judkins** travelled to Australia, earning the honour of being the first Coventry player to represent the Lions, even though he was never capped for England.



**We can't identify W Judkins in this photo, can anyone help?**

While little is known about Judkins, Coventry's next tourist was **WL Oldham**, one of their great forwards of the 20th Century and a former captain.

He travelled to Australia and New Zealand in 1908, the same year he won the first of his three England caps.



# COVENTRY'S BRITISH & IRISH LIONS



**W.L.Oldham (2nd left back row)**

Coventry would wait 30 years for their next Lion, but in 1938 **Jimmy Giles** and **Albert Purchas** were both selected for the tour to South Africa.

More is known about Giles, who was the first Coventry player to play in a test match by the Lions and was described as the best half-back Coventry have ever had.



**J.L. Giles (2nd right middle row) & A.G.Purchas (5th Left back row)**



# COVENTRY'S BRITISH & IRISH LIONS

Coventry continued to supply players after the Second World War, with skipper Ivor Preece selected for the 1950 tour to Australia and New Zealand.

Born in the city, Preece was a fly-half who played 12 times for England, and the feeling within the club, according to historian John Butler, was that he was unfortunate not to play more.

His influence on the club, where he became president in the late 70s, and the area was wide-ranging, with son Peter Preece also earning England caps while at Cov, while nearby Broadstreet play at Ivor Preece Field.

While the early Cov tourists played a key role with the Lions, some of their later contributors have written their name in Lions legend.



I.Preece (seated 3rd from right)



1950 First Test Team



# COVENTRY'S BRITISH & IRISH LIONS

On the historic 1959 tour to Australia and New Zealand **Peter Jackson** flew the flag for Cov.

It takes a lot to impress Kiwi crowds, but there is no question that flying winger Jackson managed it.

Future All Black coach Fred Allen described him thus: "By the standards of the fliers, he was almost a slow coach, but nonetheless scored scads of tries by the trickery and deceptiveness of his running. As Jackson moved ahead in rugby, he discovered that there were hypnotic qualities in the movements of his hands and body and feet."

His 16 tries on that tour remain the record for a Coventry player, and rank second only to teammate Tony O'Reilly in Lions history.



**P.B Jackson (6th right back row)**



**Running out for First Test**



# COVENTRY'S BRITISH & IRISH LIONS

Three years later **Bert Godwin** got the nod for the tour to South Africa, coming into the squad during the tour.



**Bert**

**Bert not in photo - joined the tour following an injury to S Hodgson**

Then in 1971, Lions great and one of Coventry's most famous sons, **David Duckham**, made his mark in the most famous Tour of them all.

A hugely talented centre, he played his rugby on the wing on that Tour, lining up on the left as part of one of the most exciting Lions backlines that has ever been selected.

While he helped the Lions beat the All Blacks, in Coventry Duckham is remembered just as much for helping them to RFU Knockout Cup glory in 1973 and 1974.

"The club produced a few Lions down the years, a steady trickle of them," remembers Duckham.

"To get right to the top of the game and be a British & Irish Lion after just four seasons was almost like a fairytale. As the press used to put it, it was a meteoric rise to fame, and I have a lot to thank Coventry for, the players that were around and the wealth of experience which I was able to feed off greedily."



# COVENTRY'S BRITISH & IRISH LIONS



D.J Duckham (right front row)



Try time down under



# COVENTRY'S BRITISH & IRISH LIONS

Three years on **Fran Cotton** was at Coventry when he was selected to travel to South Africa with the Invincibles.

While he only spent three seasons with Cov, he made an impact, and that Tour cemented his reputation as one of the Lions greatest-ever props.

He was joined on that Tour by fellow England international **Geoff Evans**, who played his part in helping the Lions stay unbeaten.



**F.E.Cotton (3rd left back row) & G.W.Evans (5th left middle row)**





# PARTNERS

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We have been very fortunate in agreeing partnerships with local organisations who have agreed to work with us to the benefit of members.



## Coventry Plumbing and Heating Supplies (CPHS)

[www.covplumbing.co.uk](http://www.covplumbing.co.uk)

Coventry's largest independent plumbers merchants have been trading for over 30 years and have showrooms in Swan Lane and Curriers Close, Coventry, and in Weddington Road, Nuneaton.

**CPHS have made a significant financial contribution towards the costs of setting up our website, for which we are extremely grateful.**



## Builders Supply Stores

<http://www.bsscov.co.uk/>

**Archways House, Spon End, Coventry CV1 3HG. 02476 712000/412733**

Established in 1931 BSS is an independent builders and plumbers merchant.

**BSS have agreed to pay 1 1/2 % of the total value of sales purchased by CRSC members into the CRSC bank account each quarter.**

They will set up a monitoring system at their sales points and will give the customer, who must show his CRSC membership card, a receipt accordingly.

<http://www.akbarscuisine.com>

**Akbars Indian Cuisine, 7-9 Butts, Coventry CV1 3GJ 02476 222213 / 228899**

An organisation which has been in business for over 30 years, this is a high quality restaurant serving contemporary Indian Cuisine at its best, as well as Indian tapas. It has modern décor, a bar, a lounge and a terrace.

**Upon production of their membership card, Supporters' Club members will benefit from a discount of 15% off their food bill.**

Please note: a party of 4 or less receives a 15% discount on their food bill. For parties of more than 4 people the 15% discount is applied to 4 of the party, the additional attendees receive a 7.5% discount on their food bill.

Members are asked to show their CRSC membership card to staff both when they order from the menu AND when they ask for the bill, in order to assist staff in their preparation of the bill.





# PARTNERS



We are delighted to have reached a Partnership Agreement with the **Ramada Hotel**, in The Butts (less than 5 minutes walk from BPA) who are offering:

**Car parking** - supporters can use the Ramada car park on match days for a discounted price of £2.00. On returning to their car at the end of the match supporters will be required to go into reception and produce either:

- a current **Supporters' Club membership card**
- a current **season member ticket**
- a **date-and-game-specific match ticket**



**Restaurant dining** - upon production of a current Supporter's Club membership card the bill will be subject to a 10% discount

**Accommodation** - £75.00 for bed and breakfast and £125.00 for dinner bed and breakfast, for a couple sharing either a twin or a double standard room, and subject to availability. To take advantage of this offer supporters must book directly with the hotel either by telephone (02476 238110) or email [reservations@ramadacoventry.co.uk](mailto:reservations@ramadacoventry.co.uk) since this is a local agreement - the discount cannot be applied to reservations made online - and by quoting "Coventry Rugby". It may be necessary to produce your membership card to the reception staff.

This offer is also being sent to all Championship clubs and to their Supporters Club, for their visit to Coventry next season, in the hope that many supporters' in particular will take advantage and use their weekend stay to explore and appreciate the tourist features which Coventry has to offer. We are also extolling the fact that Coventry will be the City of Culture in 2021.

## PARTNERS

We are constantly investigating the prospect of setting up more Partnership Agreements with local organisations to provide benefits for members. If you know of any potential opportunity which you think we should explore, please email us via our email address - [crsc1874@gmail.com](mailto:crsc1874@gmail.com) or via a committee member.