

In Touch



The Official Newsletter of **COVENTRY RUGBY SUPPORTERS' CLUB** Issue 10 December 2019

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



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Coventry Rugby Supporters' Club

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As we approach the halfway stage of this season, I think it is all going rather well. That's my view anyway, this being written just after the Bedford Blues Championship Cup game.

New players have been integrated quite nicely, looking from the outside obviously, Rory Jennings, Gareth Denman, an exhilarating debut for Henry Purdy, Tiki Nayalo and Ryan Burrows, forceful and driven. It's all going rather well on the pitch.

Off the pitch things also continue apace. The outside refreshments area seems to have been well received and seems to be well used by supporters. Thoughts or views are always welcomed. I gather there is likely to be some movement

soon on the redevelopment and I for one, would welcome this moving forward, if only to kill some of the ludicrous urban myths currently circulating.

CRSC continues to grow, maintaining our travel activities- thanks to all of you who have used the coaches, CRSC members and non-members - without your support, why bother? Currently we have almost 230 members and their, your, support is vital. This is your CRSC.

During the year I have experienced some special moments. Undoubtedly my match of the season was the BaaBaas-like Championship game at Goldington Road, a narrow 53-52 loss, a game of you score, they score - almost who dares wins! I left the ground that day exhausted, non-

plussed at what I had just witnessed, but glad that I had.

A bit of a toss-up for best away trip. On Cov's first league away win at Doncaster Knights - the first away win of the season - this was my 'Max Boyce' moment, my 'I was there.' How was I to know that just seven days later, on my first Jersey visit - a lovely place - Cov, on a rainy, squally and sunny interludes afternoon, would battle their way to an excellent away win to top off a successful reintroduction to Tier two rugby.

Perhaps, the most surprising moment was for my son Billy to come face-to-face with his Main Stand neighbour, dressed in woman's clothing in the Nottingham marquee and being shocked at his breezy, "Hello!"

Thinking ahead to 2020, more of the same please. Organic and safely funded progression, movement cautious but

prominent. Perhaps an area in the new development where all Cov supporters can meet - a place where the club's history can be viewed safely and revered and all the momentos currently stored in rooms across the city can be finally be reunited. This clubs history - both past and recent - must be brought together. It may take time, but it will happen.

On the playing side I view another growth spurt coming. As a supporter I am enjoying watching Cov again.

All that's left for me to say is to wish you all, on behalf of CRSC, a very Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year to you and all your families.

Best wishes

Paul Ingleston

Chair

Coventry Rugby Supporters' Club

ARTICLES FOR IN TOUCH

If you wish to submit an article for publishing in In Touch, or you would like to see something included, please make contact via a committee member or our email address – crsc1874@gmail.com

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Any suggestions as to how we can improve the Supporters' Club are always welcome, and should be made via our email address - crsc1874@gmail.com or via a committee member. Similarly, any suggestions as to how the match day experience can be enhanced by Coventry Rugby will be welcomed. We will add those suggestions to the agenda at our regular meetings at BPA.



PROJECT 500 BEGINS

On 22 October 2019 Hal Sparke wrote “It's been the first day of our special October half-term Project:500 camp at Butts Park Arena - the youngsters have been taking part in loads of activities and games, including Bulldog with players! Thanks to all the companies and individuals who have helped make this possible”



To understand further the importance of our club's involvement in the community, Dan Lewis recently wrote an excellent article. Here are a few paragraphs

“Since moving to Coventry just over one year ago today, one thing stood out so pressingly about this rugby club I had joined that was so unique to others I'd known before: its location. When I thought of every away game I'd ever played in since my tag rugby debut for Colchester Under-8's back in 2003, how many times had I turned up to a ground that was flat bang in the centre of a city? Never. Immediately, the importance of this club, and its ability to bring members of this city's society together became very much apparent. Once a week, the populates of Coventry have a focal point of sporting support, cheering on 15 players with one message shared by absolutely everyone in earshot of the referee's whistle; ‘Our Club, Our City’

To me the question became; why our city? Why our club? Why does it mean so much to me to get the opportunity to wear the blue and white on a Saturday afternoon? Why do I go out into primary schools with a bag full of tag belts and rugby balls?

In an age of touchscreen devices and the impossible task of escaping an Apple logo, so much is reachable, yet so little is tangible in today's world. Imagine being a kid today, you can find out the answer to your 1,000 questions about the meaning of life in five minutes. You can play with your friends after school without even leaving the sofa, and you can pretty much get Siri or Alexa doing your homework for you.

PROJECT 500 BEGINS cont...

So, what if, even if only for an hour or two a week, a real and tangible form of inspiration in the shape of a local rugby player coming in to coach your class and join in your English lesson, could affect one child in a positive manner? Then surely it was worth making it happen. Then surely the community side of the rugby club was more than just a branch of the business to create a couple more jobs – it was something with a purpose, it was something with a goal, a mission to bring something positive in to our city, and in to our community.



It's no exaggeration to say we live in a time in the UK where with a decrease of inspiration within today's youth a gang membership becomes more likely. It has never been more important to inspire, to encourage and to lift the youngsters of our city, and our society. They hold every ounce of potential within themselves for both Coventry and the rest of the world. So, when talking about our

city, and when talking about our club it is far more than a promotional media tool, it is something to preserve, and it's something to take care of.

I believe that Coventry Rugby is more than what it says on the tin. Yes, it's a club that plays rugby, but that is just the start of it. It provides a sense of belonging for all that support it in whatever way they can. It provides great flashes of hope in a city with uncapped potential. Most importantly, it is the common denominator for so many of us strolling in different walks of life. It is our club. It is our city.



Coventry Rugby has a range of community projects and programmes for schools and grassroots rugby clubs throughout the city and broader area, from coaching sessions through to using rugby to inspire children and young people to achieve more in their school life or inspire them to a brighter future.

To find out more email community@coventryrugby.co.uk

JERSEY - THE MINI INVASION

Following on from the last away game of the 2018/9 season, it was always going to be difficult to match the massive away contingent which Coventry Rugby took with them for that game.

When the fixture lists were announced in June the first away league game being Jersey led to a scramble for cheap flights to the beautiful island, however with less time to prepare than the previous season the cheaper flights were thin on the ground, especially from Birmingham, however with many Coventry fans having an eye for a bargain, many UK airports were used by the more prudent, to reduce the flight costs, the locals must have been somewhat bemused to see how many areas of the UK the Coventry faithful seem to live in !

Jersey is a wonderful place for Rugby, the Island is small and easily accessible by local transport and whichever part you stop in, it feels that you are never really that far from another travelling Coventry supporter and it seems that we do regularly bump into each other in Bars, restaurants, on buses etc.

Jersey Rugby club were again their very welcoming selves, a Friday night reception for the Coventry faithful was well received, a Bar and free food, hospitality does not get much better. The turnout was not as good as could be expected and certainly nowhere near as was in attendance for the previous visit, but the inclement weather and with many Coventry fans flying in on the Friday afternoon it was understandable. Jon Sharp was in attendance on behalf



of the club and in his usual style mingled and talked with all, me as ever on these away trips was looking for somewhere to hang the CRSC banner that would not annoy the locals or matchday sponsors. The final resting place being here!

(Quent: stealing a photo opportunity)

One other person who was in attendance was Neil who is the gaffer of the Trafalgar Inn at St Aubin, Neil had been in contact with the CRSC following our previous seasons trip and kindly invited all Coventry Rugby fans to his wonderful traditional and rugby loving hostelry.

The previous season we came across the pub by chance, having booked a meal in a restaurant on the same street for the Saturday evening, being early,

JERSEY - THE MINI INVASION cont..

the restaurant asked us if we would mind going to the pub next door until our table was ready, we duly obliged, as we walked back we could see none other than Pete White hanging out of the window and upon entrance the place was rammed with Coventry players and Coventry supporters enjoying their away win, considering that the Trafalgar is the regular watering hole for the Jersey Players all that could be seen that evening was a sea of blue, great times.

Because of his warm hospitality the Supporters club decided to present Neil and the Trafalgar

Pub team with one of our pennants and this is now proudly on display in the Trafalgar, it was during the conversation after the presentation that Neil also confided in us that he was big mates with Latu and on many occasions they and others from the South sea Islands drank the night away in the Pub.

Phil, Paul, Neil and Quent – Funny how the only sober looking one is the pub landlord!



If any of you do visit Jersey pay a visit to the Trafalgar inn and have your photo taken with the pennant.

(If you look closely in the background you can see a few familiar faces)

The match itself was a little disappointing but a really interesting thing for me was that the Reds fans seemed to think it was a massive victory for them and were more than delighted with the win, it did seem a little strange at the time? However, at the time of writing this and looking at our position in the table, maybe now it does not seem so strange after all.

Come on Cov!

Phil Reynolds



PHOTOGRAPHS

With so many supporters travelling to away games and for those attending the home games we invite members to send any photographs they take on their phones either before, during, or after the game that we can post onto the CRSC website. Please send your photos to crsc1874@gmail.com

THE OTHER JERSEY MATCH



While the large contingent of Coventry supporters made the journey to Jersey for our opening league game of the season, for the couple featured above, a different match was going on.

Jersey Reds were on hand to witness that Brian and Claire's vows were well recorded. The happy occasion was shrouded in secrecy and planned with military precision. Once vows were exchanged the celebrations got under way and lasted over the weekend.

The honeymoon was interrupted by the actual wedding itself (whatever next?) and the Cov game.

Congratulations to both of you.

Oh dear is that Claire in disguise or is Brian straying already?



THE VIEW FROM THE SHED

Belated

What a start to the 2019-20 season! Our Blue Boys were “robbed” of a possible victory over the Taytows. They beat our Blue rivals. They conquered Yorkshire AND amazingly they drew against Ealing.

AND the Cowshed would like to thank the grounds staff for resurrecting the pitch, to an immaculate playing surface! What could stop us now?

Last Post

The weather did not look that clever. There were thoughts the opposition would not be able to make it. However, the Knights of the Don bravely managed to kayak down from the Southern Riding flood plains.

As kick off fast approached, the Butts Arena fell to a hush, to pay their respects to the fallen of the world wars. A great poignant silent moment was only disturbed by the pitter patter of the rain, as the lone bugler sounded out the Last Post.

Argy Bargy

The Knights started strongly, keeping their back line tight and kicking their penalties. Then Cov had their chance...Jennings set the ball on the peg..and it sounded he kicked a deflated cartoon duck. He missed. The Knights were leading 6-3, when Cov lethargically awoke. Handbags were raised by both sides and the Knights got a yellow card. “Boo!” went certain sections of the crowd. The Knights’ scrum buckled and our Joe scored! 8-6 in our favour. Cov continued to press, but a dogged Knight defence quietly frustrated their opponents.

Cov kept disciplined and left the pitch, with a 8-6 half time lead.

Pocket Magic

The refreshed teams returned, with the weather being relentless. Parts of the Cowshed were getting constantly tortured by the rain and frustrated by Cov not taking the game to their opponents. The officials were stopping and starting the play and all supporters turned to booing them, rather than cheer for their teams. Something then snapped! Handbags were raised once more and the Knights received another yellow card.

Time for changes from the bench...suddenly greater urgency was being shown by Cov. Jennings made the ball fly for a successful penalty: 11-6. Then a moment of genius happened. Peter “Pocket” White deftly kick loop-floated the ball just over the heads of the Knights’ defence. It landed in the 22, for Trimble to max it...BOOM! TRY!!! HUZZAH!!! (at last)

The Knights decided to push back. This left spaces for Cov to take advantage of. The Pocket was constantly hunting down the ball. Then, whoosh...he intercepted and ran towards the try line. The Cov supporters were roaring and cheering...but NO, the whistle sounded and all the cheers turned to resounding boos!!!! Offside was called.

However the Faithful were to cheer one last time. The Knights were pushing the Cov line, towards the end of the match. Then...a Cov power maul heaved the Knights back over 10 metres. AWESOME!!! Many happy Coventry drowned rats went home, knowing Cov won 18 - 6.

COVENTRY RUGBY REPRESENTED AT EVEREST BASE CAMP



Coventry Rugby is being represented at Everest Base Camp thanks to Emma Sharp, who recently trekked to the legendary location to raise funds for charity.

Emma, the wife of Coventry Rugby's Executive Chairman Jon, was part of a group of 20 who undertook the challenge to support Mary Ann Evans Hospice in Nuneaton, which provides hospice care free of charge to people living in north Warwickshire.

Coventry Rugby supporter John Barrett organised the trek and fundraising, and Emma took a special bespoke prayer flag with the Coventry Rugby crest to Base Camp with her.

There was plenty of ambition among the group to help the hospice's work, especially the new Rapid Response team which provides new care in the patient's own homes in their last hours, and Emma made sure she prepared as well as she could under the watchful eye of Coventry Rugby's Head of Strength and Conditioning Chris Hart.

"I run with the Earlsdon Running Club, so have a basic level of fitness, but to help me on my way I signed on for some strength and conditioning coaching with Chris at Coventry Rugby," Emma says. "And it worked! Despite being weary each day, I woke to fresh legs every morning, so a massive 'thank you' to Chris!

"Reaching Everest Base Camp has been a long-held ambition, and to take on the challenge with one of my daughters made it extra special. We were also raising funds for the Mary Ann Evans Hospice in Nuneaton, my home town, so everything fell into place neatly.

"The Himalayas are truly magnificent mountains and every day the views more than compensated for the physical and mental challenges the trek posed. In our group 18 of the 20 made base camp and we have raised in excess of £50,000 so far for the Hospice.

COVENTRY RUGBY IN JAPAN

RWC 2019 - in pics



OUR MAN IN THE RUGBY WORLD CUP



We were all delighted to learn that David Halaifonua was selected to play in the recent Rugby World Cup for his native Tonga. Dan Faleafa, who also played at Coventry last season, was also included in the Tongan squad for the tournament. For David, this was his second world cup as he had previously been selected in 2015 whilst playing at Gloucester.

David earned the first of his 38 (he thinks) caps at the age of 21 and tells of the great honour it has been for him to play on so many occasions for his country. Tonga were deprived of a number of players employed by French clubs at the World Cup and David was grateful that Coventry were so supportive of him while he was away on World Cup duty.

Victory over the USA was the highlight of Tonga's campaign, though they came close to beating France. Many feel he was denied a try against Argentina in what was another close encounter. He is certain that an illegal no arms tackle deprived him a try on the world's greatest rugby stage

Since arriving in Coventry, David has enjoyed the family feel of the club and the friendship of his fellow players. His family are settled into the local community, with schools and shopping close at hand.

He has faced many great opponents during his career but named Namani Nodolo (Fiji) as the most difficult player he has played against.

A modest man of few words, David is looking forward to helping Coventry progress for the remainder of the season by doing his talking on the pitch.

WHEELCHAIR RUGBY



Our Wheelchair Rugby - sponsored by Robinson Manufacturing - is going International!

Huge congratulations to **Craig Styles**, who joined our Wheelchair Rugby Club in the summer from Northampton Saints, who has been selected for Team UK for the Invictus Games!

Styles (Twitter: @leg_wonder) will travel to The Hague with the 65-person squad made up of wounded, injured, and sick (WIS) military veterans.

He had this to say about the opportunity and his experience in Wheelchair Rugby so far: "it shouldn't be underestimated what a positive impact and life changing effect team sports can have. Sport has given me the confidence to aim high and achieve results a

few years ago I may not have felt were possible".

Mandip Sehmi (Twitter: @MandipSehmi) - the Project Officer from Coventry Rugby Foundation - showed his and the team's admiration for Craig: "We're all really proud of Craig's selection for the Invictus Games. He's only been with us a couple of months but his attitude towards training has been inspiring".

Everyone at Coventry Rugby and the Coventry Rugby Foundation wishes Craig the best of luck for the 2020 tournament.

LIBRARY



The Supporters' Club has created a library of rugby and sporting books which are available for members to borrow free of charge. A list of the titles available can be found at the back of this newsletter. If you would like to borrow any of these books, or, have any books you would like to donate, please contact the Supporters' Club via E-Mail to crsc1874@gmail.com

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY



For both Andy and Junior Bulumaku, this season could not have started any worse.

Andy was injured in our cup game against Bedford, suffering a double fracture of the cheekbone, a fractured jaw as well as a fracture to his orbit. Since then Andy has received first class medical treatment from our medical staff and has recovered fully from those injuries. Having previously suffered injuries to both his right ankle and right shoulder, he knew that patience was key to recovery and he is looking forward to returning to the fray for Coventry.

His best memories since arriving at Coventry are his first try at home against Bedford and also his fine try away at Jersey at the end of last season. He is very well settled in Coventry and puts that down to the warmth of the support he and his brother have received since their arrival here at the start of last season.

Junior was injured on week after Andy while playing against Ealing. He suffered damage to his ACL and a Medial Meniscus tear. Recovery will be slow and gradual and Junior feels that it may be after the start of next season before he is fit enough to resume playing. As a serving soldier with the Royal Regiment of Scotland Blackwatch, he has received wonderful support from both Army medics and the medical staff at Coventry Rugby in aiding his rehabilitation. Since receiving man of the match award in the Army's win over the Navy at Twickenham in 2015, Junior has continued to enjoy his rugby. His proudest moment at Coventry came on the occasion of our game against Canada in November 2018, when he played a central role in the wreath laying ceremony which preceded the game. Junior and his family are well settled in the Midlands and both he and his brother love the atmosphere of the BPA.

We were delighted to see Andy back in action recently and will continue to support the ever smiling Junior as he continues his recovery.

PARTNERS

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

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 22213 / 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 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 or via a committee member.