

# In Touch



The Official Newsletter of **COVENTRY RUGBY SUPPORTERS' CLUB** Issue 14 December 2021

Honorary President: **Jon Sharp**

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



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## Coventry Rugby Supporters' Club

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## FROM THE CHAIR...



“ Okay, Geoff. Just send me the stuff and I will put it together.” The last words I spoke to our recently departed CRSC colleague and friend, Geoff Kennedy. Geoff, he of the inquisitive and enquiring mind, had been chasing up the story of 1938 Coventry and British Lion tourist, AHG Purchas. The completed story can be found within, together with a tribute and recollection from a close friend, Barrie Duckett. CRSC have lost a valued and true friend.

Barely three hours have passed since I returned from Jersey, and prior to the Doncaster away trip, both difficult trips, but both very different in their own ways. The four day trip to the Channel Islands, a visit to another world almost, the gentle calm of marina's, sand, long nights and lots of imbibing with friends. The match itself? Truly a cliché, the epitome of 'the game of two halves'. The host's all power and fury in the first period, a 3-29 deficit leading me to question 'was it worth it'? The second period of 21 unanswered points for Cov answering my query in an emphatic, yes. The grit, determination and skills on display during that last 30 minutes offers promise.

cont...

Saturday at Castle Park is another challenge, but one which, win, lose or draw, makes me feel the Club are on the right track. I am sure there will be more changes at the end of this non-relegation season, but I for one, feel able to accept them, even though I am sure there will be some surprise in some quarters.

Most of us expected a difficult season, or two. The lack, or should I say decimation, of RFU funding was bound to lead to challenges. This has proved to be so. The Fans Forum at the beginning of December was informative and honest as always. Rowland answered questions on the team's difficulties and selection issues. Chief Executive Nick Johnston had some excellent news on the development of the BPA. I think most supporters will be happy with the progress being made.

The next two seasons will probably finish up negative in terms of winning statistics, but very, very positive in terms of the talent slowly being filtered through from the Academy. We are slowly beginning to see the fruits of all the hard work that is going on, work that we are not privy to in terms of viewing. I, for one, am starting to get excited at the progress being made in all areas, on and off the pitch.

I wish a Happy Christmas to you and all your families and look forward to the return of the Boxing Day fixture, Ampthill at the BPA. Come along and give the team your support, this support is vital, both now and in the future.

All the best

*Paul Ingleston*

Chair

Coventry Rugby Supporters' Club



## WELCOME TO ERIN AND LAUREN

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It's a warm welcome to new Coventry Rugby staffers, Erin Barber and Lauren O'Shea. Erin, Coventry Rugby's new communications overseer, has hit the ground running with her Media output, social media, allied to the relaunched website and you can already see how productive she has recently been. Thanks for your efforts so far Erin.

Also, new to the club is Lauren O'Shea. Lauren's specific job title is Partnerships and Conference Sales Executive. Welcome aboard Lauren and we hope people will soon be queuing out the door to discuss any opportunity to enhanced opportunities.

Good luck Lauren.

## ON HIS BIKE

At the end of September, Coventry Rugby said farewell and good luck to Media and Communications Manager, Chris Wearmouth.

Chris secured a new role as PA to the CEO of British Cycling and is, by now, based in Manchester. Chris was one of the vital cogs in keeping the club afloat during the 'dark days' of the pandemic. Although the club was shut down, Chris, amongst others, was keeping things going, answering enquiries, sorting out shop stock and generally juggling his time and boundless energy, to keep us afloat. For that we say many thanks and wish Chris well.

Chris's last game was at the Amptill away loss. Post-match, after his last copy was away, CRSC presented Chris with an engraved tankard as a memento of his time and efforts.

Good luck Chris.



## BACK TO THE LAND DOWN UNDER



Moving on, and a massive change, at the end of October was Elizabeth, Liz to her friends, Martin. Liz, together with husband Andy and young son, Jacob, has left for a special job opportunity back in her native Australia. The role, with international hotel group, Hyatt Hotels, was too good an opportunity to turn down, especially with her growing family.

Liz, as Commercial and Events Manager was a dynamic force for Coventry Rugby, the sight of a speeding Liz moving from hotspot to hotspot was a sight to behold, always done with her permanent smile. Mostly working from

home on furlough during the pandemic, Liz was an integral part of off-field activities and will be missed. We wish them all well.

Might be looking for some rooms in 2025 Liz!

Quentin Melhuish and Phil Reynolds presented Liz with a bouquet, before the Ealing Trailfinders fixture.



# HONORARY PRESIDENT - Jon Sharp

On the 30th September 2021, Executive Chairman of Coventry Rugby – Jon Sharp, was unanimously elected to the post of Honorary President of the Supporters Club in recognition of Jon's outstanding contribution to Coventry Rugby over the past several years.



When considering Jon's drive, passion, vision and ambition for the future of the Club along with the redevelopment plans for the Butts Park Arena, the Committee determined Jon was fully deserving of the accolade of 'Honorary President' of the Supporters' Club.

Speaking on the matter, Jon commented "I was honoured to be asked to be President of CRSC and delighted to accept. CRSC is represented by a dedicated group of True Blues who do a great job for all our supporters and who work cooperatively with management in a number of ways, through which we share the common goal of continuous improvement and development of all aspects of our great club."



Prior to the Richmond game on the 2nd October 2021 at Butts Park Arena, Paul Ingleston (Chairman), Quentin Melhuish (Secretary) & Phil Reynolds (Treasurer) presented Jon with a bottle of Malbec Limited Reserva red wine on behalf of the Supporters Club as a gesture of goodwill and celebration.

The Supporters Club would like to take this opportunity to thank Jon for his outstanding contribution to Coventry Rugby and welcome him as their Honorary President.

# CRSC RAFFLES

Coventry Rugby Supporters Club have been running raffles at home Championship fixtures. These were the games against Ealing Trailfinders (23.10.2021), Nottingham (6.11.2021) and Bedford Blues (4.12.2021). It is also our intention to run a raffle at our BPA Boxing Day fixture against Amptill, 26.12.2021, 1.30pm kickoff.

The prizes have been a mixture of home and away shirt vouchers , first prize plus tickets, VP and match day tickets. The raffles have been very popular. The winning tickets so far have been:

**23.10.2021 1st Prize Orange ticket 107 Claimed**

**2nd Prize Orange ticket 259 Claimed**

**3rd. Prize Orange ticket 182 Majestic Cov book, Unclaimed**

**6.11.2021. 1st Prize Orange ticket 498 Claimed**

**2nd Prize Blue ticket 121 Claimed**

**3rd Prize Pink 237 Claimed**

**4.12.2021 1st Prize Orange ticket 68 Claimed**

**2nd Prize Grey ticket 67 Unclaimed**

**3rd Prize Orange ticket 50 Claimed**

Thank you to everyone who has taken part, your support is vital as ALL monies raised go towards supporting our club, Coventry Rugby. However, it is very likely that the Amptill Raffle will be the last one operated by CRSC at the current time, due to logistical issues in running these raffles.

## THANK YOU TO JO

Another photo opportunity for CRSC as they present thank you gifts to Joanne Hill for her support during the CRSC raffles.



# THE 'LOST' COVENTRY BRITISH LION



In a previous In Touch, Geoff Kennedy wrote about the 1938 British Lions tour to South Africa. The tour featured two Coventry RFC players, Jimmy Giles and AHG Purchas. The story of legendary Giles is well known, but little information was known about Purchas. Until now. Thanks to AHG Purchas's son, Brian, the tale can be told.

## ARTHUR HORSFALL GRIFFITHS PURCHAS

Arthur Horsfall Griffiths Purchas, henceforth AHG, was born on 29th May 1912 at 216 South Priest Street, San Jose, California, USA. He was brought up at Oilfields, Fresno and Alameda City until his parents returned to England in 1915.

He attended Rossall School, Fleetwood where, obviously good at most sports, he got colours at Rugby, Hockey, Boxing and Athletics and was a Sergeant in the OTC, Officer Training Corps.

Leaving school in 1930, AHG joined the Westminster Bank in Lincoln, joining Lincoln Rugby Club, playing for them until 1934, usually at number 8, becoming vice-captain of the club in 1933. Between 1930 and 1934 he played for Notts Lincs & Derby in the County Championship and for the Westminster Bank. He also joined the Territorial Army as a 2nd Lieutenant.

In 1935 he moved to the Westminster Bank, Coventry, on the corner of High Street and facing Broadgate and joined Coventry Rugby Club, for whom he played at number 8 until 1939 and the outbreak of WW2. During this period he also played for Warwickshire in the County Championship. In 1938 he and Jimmy Giles were the two Coventry players to be selected for the Lions Tour to South Africa. He played in a number of the provincial matches but was not selected for the Test Matches.

At the start of WW2 he was called up and sent to France in 1940 with the British Expeditionary Force as Commander of 'A' Company in the 7th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment (Territorial Army), or the Royal Warwick's, as known locally. Whilst covering the retreat to Dunkirk his right shin bone was shattered by machine gun fire and he was taken prisoner. AHG was repatriated in October 1943, in an exchange of non-combatants officers, and saw out the war as adjutant of an officer training facility in Northern Ireland. Owing to the severity of his leg injury he never played rugby again.

AHG had two children, one girl and one boy, both born in the late 1940's. He remained with the Westminster Bank, which then became the National Westminster Bank, until his retirement in 1972 at which time he was the Manager of the Beverley Branch in East Yorkshire. The love of rugby obviously never left AHG as he became President of Beverley RUFC, holding that position when Beverley moved to their current ground and opened their, then, new clubhouse. He died in September 1992 at the age of 80.

Thank you to Brian Purchas and Andy Innes for providing information.



# THE 'LOST' COVENTRY BRITISH LION

Fellow CRSC member and local historian, Malvern Carvell , has also supplied this fine testimony.

Although not selected for the Tests he scored a try in the match against North-Easterns going “over at the corner from a line-out.” One report on the tour contains the following comment:

“One player who appears to have impressed South African critics is A. H. G. Purchas, the Coventry back-row forward. This I know will not surprise my Midlands friends, who always maintain that Purchas should have been capped three or four years ago, and I am rather inclined to agree. He is very big and for a man of his size, surprisingly fast. Further, and this is the most important point of all in my opinion, he really does a job of work in the scrum. So many back-row forwards these days seem to regard themselves as insulted if they are asked to shove...”

I hope you will agree, at 6' 3" and almost 15st, AHG must have been a powerful unit and deserving of this profile, with a story worth telling.



AHG Purchas - Coventry v London Welsh, 1938



Lions, South Africa 1938 - AHG Purchas (standing far right)



British Lions, Coventry's Jimmy Giles and AHG (Griff) Purchas



AHG Purchas, April 15th , 1939, Coundon Road ( obviously the ideal position for the scoreboard and clock!)

# FIREWORKS DISPLAY 2021

The return of the Fireworks Display on Sunday 7th November was, possibly, the best yet. Over 3500 people attended with plenty of smiling faces witnessed at the displays final big bang.

Thanks to main Sponsors, Builders' Supply Stores and Julian Ballinger, assisted by local Lions' groups, spectators and the attending voluntary groups with stalls, it was a sparkling success! The gap caused by the pandemic probably helped to raise the interest levels this year.



Thank you to everyone who attended and we look forward to doing it all again in 2022.

Photos courtesy of John Coles. Thank you John.





# COVENTRY RUGBY SUPPORTERS' CLUB AWAY TRAVEL

It is our intention to provide coach travel to all of our remaining Championship fixtures. These will be:

- **02/01/2022 Richmond** Richmond Athletic Ground ( bookings already open)
- **22/01/2022 Ealing** Trailfinders Vallis Way
- **11/02/2022 Nottingham Lady Bay** - Friday, 7.45pm kickoff
- **12/03/2022 Bedford Blues** Goldington Road

All are Saturday trips, apart from Nottingham.

Information regarding booking, prices, departure times etc will be released in due course. We will be maintaining our Early Bird booking criteria and look forward to you travelling with us. Our preferred method of payments are by bank transfer but contact us for more details when booking your travel.

Keep watching for updated information, as and when it is released, but for more information visit our website [csrc174.com](http://csrc174.com).



# FANS' FORUM

## **On Thursday December 2nd, CRSC held a Fans Forum at the BPA.**

Attending were Chief Executive Nick Johnston, DoR Rowland Winter, with President Peter Rossborough presiding over the proceedings as a moderator for the Question and Answer format. The event began at 7pm.

Although present, I did not take notes and this, brief, description of what was said is purely from my memory! I have used initials to identify the responses from Nick Johnston and Rowland Winter, purely a guide. Hope this will be beneficial to you.

RW was asked about anticipation, were the fans expectations too high for this season?

RW answered , he thought there was a possibility of too high expectations on both Club and fans side at the start of the season. This season hasn't been helped by the high number of injuries, some long term ones, but the problems have also allowed the progress of Senior Academy players to play more games, Evan Mitchell, Louis James, Tom Ball et al. RW used the example of Evan saying visiting Cornwall was Evan's first trip down there. These are big steps for some of these youngsters. RW also said that some of the senior players form has dropped at times. But RW ended this question by saying , No we should have high expectations.

**Academy** - On the Academy, as witnessed by the spoken of progressions there is a huge potential in the Academy system coming through, both at Under 18's and Under 19's levels. Players are joining up from all over the Midlands and further afield to come to the system. This is great promise and it's something that is starting to pay off , Coventry have jumped ahead of other sides and will benefit.

The problem currently being experienced are that, because the BUCS policy makers deciding Cov Academy had to play in the second bottom tier, teams they are playing against are just not at the same level and often the game is called off as our Academy are far too strong for them. Hopefully, a future repositioning will allow better challenges against longer and more well known sides, Exeter, Bristol etc. But the bottom line is that the Academy is working.

**Results/DR** - I have put these together as I think they are linked.

RW was asked if he was frustrated by the DR situation, players training then getting pulled back by the mother club. RW was very candid, as always, yes this was an issue, but the situation hasn't been helped by the number of injuries , 14+, a lot of long-term injuries in that , Luc Jeannot , Sentiki Nayalo etc. RW had approached the season start with the aim of long-term loans, some have been done, Sam Aspland-Robinson as a point, but the injury landscape made short term loans a necessity. RW said the injury situation was now easing with players coming back into selection contention.

RW also mentioned that the Coaching team was also very different to last year, a massive turnover Antony Allen, Louis Deacon , now James Scaysbrook, Alex Rae and Tony Fenner taking his first steps on the coaching ladder. RW said the team are learning together and gelling all the time.

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# FANS' FORUM

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NJ started off , remembering it was on a Q and A basis , gave his thoughts on how the RFU were magnificently running the game (tic!) Asked about the state of the Club, NJ was in an upbeat mood. Obviously the pandemic had thrown the club a curved ball, as with other clubs, progression had been stifled and the club had had a massive turnover in personnel, players and support staff. NJ was confident that the positive move of recruiting more staff, staff learning the ropes, will stand the club in good stead moving forward. Lots of different initiatives were being implemented, ticketing, events etc and overall, after the two years of ' clearing out the skeletons' , the club was better placed now,

NJ was asked about the league format and TV deals. He stated that there is no likelihood of a meaningful league until season 2023/2024, coincidentally 2024 ,Cov's 150th Anniversary. The results of the current Strategy Review next February could recommend a Premiership Two, Cov must have a chance of being one of the six clubs invited ( IMHO , this Strategy Review is already compiled, printed and ready to go out as they, the RFU, want it, Paul).

TV deals, NJ was particularly scathing on the TV deal done by the RFU, selling rights to a company that has 0.1% of the market!

As one, perhaps the only club being perceived as ' trouble', NJ says, in response to the players being restricted to mingling with the spectators post-match, NJ stated that, in his opinion, Cov would be the only club singled out if any restrictions or breach of protocols were found to have taken place.

The RFU were watching.....

## **Ground Development**

In response to a question of where we are, NJ had some good news. At last the securing of the long-term ground lease extension was about to be signed off, had been a while, but there was now real positivity.

Partnership deals had been signed for Development, likely dates, pending on Full Council Approval, the hotel, Holiday Inn, date of September 2023, Costa Coffe Drive-through (RW hoping for a Black Card!) and agreements in place for the park side development, including function area, bar area and Cowshed in from of the accommodation block behind.

Hopefully, all being well , pending objections, full approval, ground should be broken in May next year.

This is just a flavour of what was discussed. Thank you to Nick Johnston, Rowland and 'moderator' Peter Rossborough, which was a pleasant and non-aggressive evening.

Paul Ingleston





# OBITUARIES

Recently, sadly, Coventry Rugby have lost some members of their playing past. CRSC would just like to pay our respects.

**George Grace** made his debut in season 1954/55 and played for Cov until season 1963/64. Prop George appeared 113 times for the Blue and Whites and also represented the county, Warwickshire.

**Graham Creed**, brother of club Captain, Roger Creed, and also a prop, wore the hoops for 102 times from 1968 to 1974. Graham also represented Warwickshire and The Midlands during this time.

Finally, **George 'The Boot' Cole**, a Coventry legend passed away. The all-time Coventry points scorer, scrum half George amassed an amazing 2,858 points, playing 452 times for the club. Both appearances and points tallies are club records. They will probably never be beaten. Making his playing bow in season 1953/54 until season 1972/73, George played for Barbarians, Midlands and Warwickshire and was a club captain and, post playing, was almost always to be seen on the touch line at his beloved 'Cov.'

We send all our thoughts, wishes and sympathies to their families and loved ones. Thank you.

*Information taken from the amazing book, **Majestic Cov**. Get your copy from [coventryrugby.co.uk/buttsparkshop](http://coventryrugby.co.uk/buttsparkshop)*

CRSC would also like to offer our condolences to long-standing CRSC member and ex-Committee member, Mick Carter, and all his family, on the recent passing of wife, Pat. Our thoughts go to you all on your recent loss.

# GEOFF KENNEDY

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The news of Geoff's passing on December 5th was a terrible shock to everyone who knew him. Geoff was the epitome of 'the force of nature.' The word ebullient fitted and described Geoff to perfection.

I first met Geoff at Coundon Road, the shake of the hand, a very firm handshake, and the cheerful bonhomie of someone you'd known for a very, very long time, not just for the very first meeting. Geoff would be like a whirlwind, moving on from group to group to 'have a few words', very often more than a few!



Husband, father, brother, a former travel agent, school governor, honorary Coventrian, proud Irishman, but an even prouder Coventry Rugby supporter, once met, never forgotten. Part of 'Eric's Army of volunteers, he was very often down at the ground, helping out with all that has to be done to keep it in good shape. I am sure Geoff will be sorely missed by the group.

Geoff was the main part of CRSC's magazine, In Touch, getting articles, photos, contributions, 'gently cajoling' people for copy before sending on to our designer, Rob, for final compilation. The end result of usual high quality.

To us all, Geoff will be not in sight, but always remembered, there will be more than a few toasts the next time we all get together.

Our thoughts and sympathies go to wife, Roseleen, close family and his many, many friends from across the land and further afield. Geoff, God Bless.

Paul Ingleston



# GEOFF KENNEDY

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Geoff Kennedy was Coventry Rugby through and through... a part of Eric's Army, CRSC Committee member and a passionate supporter both on and off the pitch. He welcomed new players with open arms, gave fatherly advice to those up and coming and shared many a craic with current and former players alike often ending, after a Guinness or two, with his rendition of Fields of Athenry or Wild Colonial Boy.

His dulcet Irish tones would often ring out from his seat on the back row of Block 6 berating officialdom, showing his frustration at a mistimed box kick, a missed tackle or knock on or simply applauding good play and decisions whilst those around him sometimes looked sheepishly on.

Many of the Cov faithful had known him for a number of years with his sparkly eyes (as the Rugby World reporter described him in an article on the club in 2018) and his wry smile often hinting at but rarely achieving mischief. He was a great rugby traditionalist keeping alive ties with Dublin Wanderers representing the club at many a function or entertaining the diminishing band of supporters who still made the yearly trip. He will be greatly missed. RIP Geoff.'

Barrie Duckett



## To Geoff, from the CRSC

The sun is falling and its time to go  
We say our goodbyes, which is hard we know  
We all go in the end and this we do  
It doesn't make it any easier at the end of the show

We remember the good and remember the bad  
For Supporters of Coventry this time is so sad  
But through the Club, a friendship was had  
That friendship lives on, for this we are glad

You touched our hearts with your charm and guile  
Your kindness spread wide, over mile and mile  
You did things your way, it was your unique style  
Geoff Kennedy the man, with a cheeky Irish smile

Geoff the time has now come to say good-bye  
I read this poem, with a tear in my eye  
Thank you, my friend, for once saying hi  
I will remember the craic as I hope not to cry

Slainte

Phil Reynolds  
02/12/21



# 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 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:

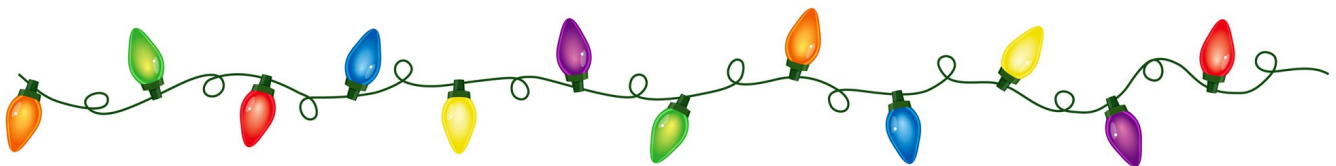
- a current **Supporters' Club membership card**
- a current **season member ticket**
- a **date-and-game-specific match ticket**



**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](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.