

TOUCHLINE

End of Season Edition - 2010/11



STOP PRESS

The draw for Round 1 of the Kent Cup has been made. Maidstone have a bye into Round 2 where they will host the winners of the tie between Sevenoaks & Medway.

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President's Piece

Bob Beney - Making Changes

What a Season!

My first year as president has certainly had many peaks and troughs. From a very sad personal beginning to a mid-table finish and then to be relegated and so on. Following the club's final meeting with the RFU, we both agreed that it is in all our interests to move on from the eye incident. We are now putting a firm line in the sand.

Looking positively forward I have some very good things to report. On the playing front we had a very commendable season. This is down to the efforts of new Director of Rugby, Andy Foley and his team. Everyone just wanted to play rugby, after all this is what we are, a rugby club. Andy has exciting plans for next season. The new flood lights have been to the benefit of all those that have been training and we have increased the playing area at the back of the first team pitch for the junior tag-rugby section. This work is now being completed following a great job done by all concerned and the benefit will be seen in the future.

The President's Project

Both the cricket and rugby clubs have identified that the whole site needs to be tidied up. Currently the eyesore that is the little building (tabernacle) to the right of the clubhouse is being repaired/renovated. During the summer we will upgrade the rugby stand and we plan to paint the railings and generally tidy up all the rugby playing areas. We can all help here, if you have rubbish please use the bins provided.

My plan is to renew the posts on the top pitch, this will enhance the whole area and make it a smarter place to play. I ask you all to consider making a donation to this project (please send it to me). I have applied for some funding for this and I am optimistic, but there is very likely to be a short-fall. All help will be very welcome. Thank you in advance and thank you to those who have already donated. You will see that, with a moderate amount of help, we will have a far smarter environment in which to play the game. This whole site in the middle of Maidstone can surely become something that we can all be proud of and, as a result, all who visit and play there will enjoy the experience.

Just look at some of the other rugby clubs we visit, how lucky we are. Of course, you will be thinking, but what about the state of our clubhouse? Some of us love it, but it is long past its 'sell by date' and when you see what other clubs can offer, it is clear that we desperately need to change. I am pleased to tell you that something is afoot at long last. We are looking very seriously at replacing the whole building. This is long overdue and while it is early days much work is going on to achieve this end. This will be great for all sports not least ourselves. We anticipate that this will be funded by the sale of some land for development. Not a new idea but I believe this time it will work.

Maidstone Borough Council, under their new Chief Executive Alison Broom, has been very instrumental in getting not only all interested sports partners together but putting at our disposal all the expertise to help us. I believe that, in conjunction with the overall regeneration of Mote Park currently being carried out, the planned improvements to our own sports area will further compliment the entire area. A new Clubhouse/Pavilion will complete the picture and, in the meantime, we will keep you informed of any significant developments as they occur.



E-mail or Snail Mail

On the subject of communication, the advent of e-mail has meant that more and more of us do so electronically. High postage costs make it very prudent to use other means but if any of you know of someone who would still benefit from traditional paper communication, please let us know. They must not be forgotten.

Trevor Langley

I now want to take this opportunity to congratulate Trevor Langley on his award of the Harry Green trophy in recognition of his services to the club. In his time with the club Trevor has been involved with so many ways; as President, Chairman, Press Officer, Referee, Fixture Secretary, 7's Organiser and, in more recent years, he has been very active in planning for the future development of the club. I doubt if there has ever been someone who better deserves this award.

Our Sponsors

Finally I want to mention our sponsors without whose generosity this club could not function. That is a fact! Their generosity and support cannot be overstated. I personally thank them all. Please make a point of thanking them and, where appropriate, using their services.

Summer well and see you next season. **BB**



The Chairman's Report

Moving the Club Forward

Having had time to reflect on my three year tenure as Director of Rugby and latterly Chairman, I can only describe it as a remarkable experience but, sadly, not always for the right reasons.

Having been appointed in the aftermath of the resignation of Tony Dray, there was a great deal to do in my first season with the club. After previous seasons of gradual decline in performance, the 1st XV finished bottom of London 2 South East. However, restructuring by the RFU meant that there were to be no enforced relegations and, as a club, we decided to stay in the same league. With hindsight (which we all know is a wonderful thing), perhaps we should have elected to go down a league to consolidate and rebuild.

This view was borne out in my second season, where we won only one game in the newly formed London 1 South East against our local rivals Aylesford who, with a deficit of minus-2, were relegated alongside us. It was also during this season, that we parted with Tim McBennett as Head Coach, who had been at the Club for 10 seasons. Most significantly, in the same season, an incident took place that would rock the very foundations of the Club culminating in a £2,000 fine, a 50 point penalty and subsequent relegation to London 3 South East for the 11/12 season – more of that later.

The club has never been in a healthier position...

Against this background, one could conclude that we have had little to shout about in recent times. However, nothing could be further from the truth. We now have state-of-the-art floodlights, a burgeoning youth section, spearheaded by a mushrooming minis section and a new training area. We continue to increase our loyal player base and are recruiting well for next season including Scottish Premiership player, Hayden Mitchell, who joins us in a player/coaching role and Nick Cullen from National league 3 side, Bracknell. In addition, we still field 5 sides, were finalists at the Evergreen cup again this year (always the bridesmaid, never the bride) and are on the verge of becoming one of the few clubs in the South East to have achieved the RFU-driven, Whole Club Seal of Approval. Couple this with an excellent infrastructure of personnel and a forward thinking Executive Committee driving a coherent and robust three year plan and I believe that the club has never been in a healthier position. This is all further enhanced and underpinned by the recent appointments of Andy Foley as Director of Rugby, (who will also continue as Head Coach), Des Diamond as Club Coaching Co-ordinator, Sean McGuire as Youth Chair and Carol McKenzie as Head of House, all of whom are making great strides in moving the Club forward.

Although I do not wish to mar what we have achieved, I do wish to mention the incident that I alluded to earlier as a form of closure for us all. Unless you have been living in a vacuum, you will know that for the last 18 months, we have been defending ourselves against an alleged deliberate eye gouging incident, which very sadly led to the blinding and subsequent removal of the eye of the former Gravesend player, Clarence Harding.

Whilst we have never accepted or agreed with the findings of RFU in relation to this incident being a deliberate act by player or players unknown, we have now exhausted all available avenues to contest the judgement of the RFU.



Towards happier days

People will naturally have their own opinions as to what may or may not have happened (as is their right) and we can all debate the whys and wherefores of the sanctions imposed upon us. In my view, however, the club now needs to move on and focus its energies on re-building for the future. As such, I would urge you all to draw a line under this episode in Maidstone Rugby's history for the greater good of the club and look towards happier days.

I for one, found it difficult to reconcile myself with the findings of the RFU and as some of you may be aware I tendered my resignation as a result of the impact that it had on me. However, following a 'behind closed doors' meeting with the RFU, where I had an opportunity to 'exorcise my soul' and present our case, which culminated in us agreeing to disagree, I have decided to stay as Chairman. My reversal of decision is a true statement of solidarity, which I hope shows the rugby community that we are all standing together to rebuild the reputation and fortunes of the Club. So the message is clear, if I am prepared to put this whole matter to bed, given how the experience has affected me then so can you all. Enough said!

I now look forward with great relish to what I believe will be a renaissance period for Maidstone Rugby Club with exciting times ahead. For me, being Chair of such an illustrious club is a real honour and I pledge to continue to represent the best interests of the Club at all times and lead the drive for our collective success.

Lastly, I would like to say a huge thank you for the continued support of the officers of the club, our sponsors, spectators and players, who as a whole make Maidstone Rugby Club such a special place to play or be involved with.

So onwards and upwards and, hopefully, I will see a good number of you at the Summer Ball.

By the way, in case you are asking "Mine's a Guinness" **AG**



ENJOY
RESPONSIBLY



Thoughts from the DoR & Head Coach

Andy Foley looking forward to a much better season

The 2010/2011 season was always going to be a tough one, with the memories of the previous two seasons still lingering, it was important to demonstrate that Maidstone could win a rugby game, and have a successful year. Pre-season went well; wins against Cranbrook and Folkestone were gratefully received, without even getting into 3rd gear. Without the points deduction, and the fall out we have had to deal with, I guess we could have commanded a top five position. The and highlights were beating Sevenoaks home and away, playing a controlled and dominant brand of Rugby. But there were other games we should have won - after being in a position to put the final nail in, we managed to throw away wins against Brighton away, Lewes at home and in all fairness we should have beaten Deal and Betteshanger in the opening month. There must be lessons learnt from the foregoing fixtures so, for me, the school report says 6/10 and could do better.

Honourable Mentions

Firstly, Lee Thomson (Player of the Year) and Ollie Newton (Young Player of the Year) both thoroughly deserving of their respective awards and Saturdays apart, both their attitudes were first rate in training and off the pitch. Other players to mention:

Josh McKenzie, playing in the demanding No.2 jersey, had a good season and will surely come back fitter, stronger and more confident next season.

Andy Bacon was a model pro, and turned in good performances on a regular basis, whilst Nick Coles his 'partner in crime' showed glimpses of his true potential.

Luke Day and Lack Lamb fought over the 7 shirt and whoever wore it guaranteed a determined and first rate performance.

Tommy King started the season at 10, and we missed him after Xmas when he returned to new Zealand to further his teaching career. Fellow antipodean Dane Smith then took on the 10 shirt and stood up to the task admirably.

The outside backs showed glimpses of brilliance with, Graves, Iles and Ryan showing their undoubted ability. Youngster Jason Smith played most games on the wing, and just like Olly Newton is an enormous talent for the future. Other players to mention, Matt Plowman who steadied the scrum, and Sam Bailey who suffered a serious injury at the start of the season, but came back at the end to make a significant contribution.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the skipper John O'Brien for all his hard work, and my fellow coaches Fin Davies and Shaun Neaves, and off course Andy Golding for whom I have enormous respect. Also a big thanks to the physiotherapy team of Sadie, Anna, Catherine and Andy, all first rate practitioners who have managed our needs very professionally.

So, with next season not too far away; where do we go from here?



LEE



OLLIE



Next Season

The short term objectives are for the 1st and 2nd XV's to win their leagues, I believe that club is equipped to do that, and this should be our aim. Although it is fair to say that to win London 3 will require the 1st XV squad to win over 96% of their games.

I would also like to target the RFU competition, where, like our neighbours we could end up with a trip to Twickenham. I would also like to see more interaction between the teams, with a desire to help each other out and a one club ethos. I am also asking the committee to consider free food after the game, on the premise that OUR teams sit together with the opposition and enjoy a meal, a chat and a beer, like most rugby clubs would.

With regard to the set up next year, Hayden Mitchell recently recruited from Melrose will be the forwards player coach, with Shaun Neaves sub-specialising for this season and looking after scrummaging. Hayden is a Kiwi with a great pedigree, his latest accolade being winning this season's Scottish Premiership with Melrose. Hayden will also visit local schools coaching rugby during the week, also helping out with Maidstone teams in the week, and will be around the youth age groups on a Sunday.

Fin Davies will also be involved in the First XV set up, performing the dual task of match day manager and video analysis.

We welcome Pete Barford to the senior coaching staff with a particular responsibility for the Mustangs & Development XV's; Pete is well known at the club and has a great pedigree for developing young talent.

Duncan McClintock has agreed to skipper the Mustangs again next season, with a view to winning the league as previously mentioned.

There will be other players coming in to help strengthen the current squad, please contact me if you can help with accommodation, employment or just mentoring.

This is now our chance to take this club forward, but more people are needed to get involved; just turning up and watching, maybe even criticising, will not change anything.

I look forward to hearing your views and thoughts. **AF**



PETE



HAYDEN



FIN



SHAUN



Ups & Downs

Bob Hayton's review of 'What Happened Where' in Kent Rugby

There was a lot of rugby played elsewhere in Kent and for well after the bulk of the clubs had finished the regular season, although in part for the sides at Level 6 and below this was due the block of cold and snowy weather that engulfed the county in mid-season, throwing many of the fixture schedules out of kilter. The one aspect that does seem to suffer as a result is the Cup competitions, particularly the county competitions.

In National 1 Blackheath finished in a creditable fifth place, although well off the pace of the promotion battle. With a young side they started well with an away victory at eventual champions London Scottish, but an indifferent end to November and through into the New Year saw a number of narrow losses that really ended any promotion hopes they may have harboured at the start of the campaign.

In National 2 (S) both the county's sides saw themselves involved in the relegation dog-fight at the end of the season, city club Canterbury started brightly enough but poor results in October and November, plus failing to capitalise on really winnable fixtures in the New Year to strugglers Shelford, Hinckley and away at Newbury left them scrapping to avoid the drop in the last month. Combe started poorly and it wasn't until October's wins against Lydney and Newbury that they started to get going, although it wasn't until the end of February that they posted their next winning result. For both the county's clubs it all came down to a 'winner takes all' clash on the last day of the season at Merton Lane, with Combe taking the spoils leaving the city club to drop to National 3 (SE) for next season where they will lock horns with Gravesend and Tonbridge Juddians.

In National 3(SE), after a narrow win at North Walsham in the season opener, which was followed by four successive defeats, Gravesend must have wondered what hit them, but they stabilised the ship and some consistency came with them ending the season in sixth place and winning as many games as they lost.

Kent's interest in London 2 was divided between both the north and south divisions, with the quirks of last season's promotion and relegation meaning that Sidcup and Old Colfeians were level-transferred. Both sides were always competitive performers but Sidcup proved the more consistent to finish second behind Westcliff and take the play-off spot against the counterparts in London 1 (S), London Irish. Colfes finished eighth after their late season results tailed off, particularly the back to back defeats at the hands of relegated Stevenage.

In London 1 (S) the pace setters were the semi-pro Tonbridge Juddians, although their long unbeaten league-run came to an end in October at the hands of Cobham. The battle for second involved several clubs, including Beckenham and Dover although their challenges, as with those of Haywards Heath and Portsmouth, fell away in the latter half of the season. This left London Irish to battle it out with Chichester, a contest that ran to the last day of the season with the Irish taking the runners up spot and subsequently defeating Sidcup in the play-off for promotion. Further down the table. Thanet flirted with the 'drop zone' but a much more consistent second half to the season saw them climb to tenth in the division. Tunbridge Wells had a torrid campaign that sees them relegated along with Wimbledon and a Chobham side that didn't post a win all season.



In London 2 (SE) Old Elthamians bounce straight back after last season's relegation and are the only club promoted from the division, Aylesford occupied the play-off position, and after an elongated season that took them to the 22nd May, they fell at the final hurdle in both of their quests for honours, going down in both the Intermediate cup and losing the play-off 14-28 to Eastleigh based Trojans. Sevenoaks' challenge for the play-off spot had dissipated towards the end of the season and East Grinstead's challenge suffered through a points deduction. In fact; point deductions had a big bearing in this division, not only ruining Grinstead's promotion challenge but also putting Deal & Betteshanger in relegation danger and of course sending us down a division. Elsewhere Old Dunstonians finished in mid table after a rocky start to the campaign.

The battle at the top of London 3(SE) was always tight and went right to the end of the season, with Crowborough just losing out to Heathfield and Waldron with Charlton Park taking second spot. Medway, Park House and Folkestone took the next three places, but quite a bit off the pace of the top three; Bromley finished in lower mid table, with Dartfordians bottom and relegated along with Cranbrook after both spending just one season in the division.

In Kent 1, Ashford took the title with Sheppey as runner up and promoted after defeating Sussex club Burgess Hill in the play-off. A points deduction saw Sittingbourne drop down the table as Anchorians took third place; the Gillingham side always just miss out on the promotion places. Old Gravesendians finished fourth with Vigo fifth. At the bottom of the table it appears that Whitstable have been spared relegation after the mid-season withdrawal of Old Olavians and the spectacular implosion of Lordswood following their deduction of 25 league points; a situation that took them from promotion challengers to relegation.

Kent 2 saw an interesting battle, with several clubs in with a shout for promotion. Eventually Guys & St. Thomas's Hospital took the title, to be joined in Kent 1 by runners up Shooters Hill. Southwark Lancers had a remarkable season, after a 61 point beating on the opening day by Guys, they held the same side to 19-12 on the last day and finished in a creditable fourth place. At the foot of the table Askeans had an improvement in form in the New Year to move above Erith who finish bottom of Kent's senior sides.

In the RFU knockout competitions not all the county's sides appear to enter these days and of the entries in the Intermediate Cup, only Aylesford got beyond the second round and a great cup run saw them progress to beat Romford & Gidea Park in the Regional Final and then Berry Hill in the national semi-finals, before losing out to Midland side Stoke on Trent in the showpiece final at Twickenham. In the senior Vase only Medway progressed beyond the third round, eventually going down in the regional semi-final to high flying Teddington who eventually stormed to a comprehensive victory at Twickenham for the second consecutive year. The Junior Vase saw several of the county sides have good runs, with Ashford, Sheppey, Vigo and Sittingbourne all making round four, and Sheppey and Ashford going out in the fifth round; Ashford to eventual national winners the HAC .

In the four county competitions there were a few different clubs in the respective finals; the Kent Cup competition was not as predictable as in previous seasons, although defending champions Gravesend again made the final and took on a TJs side that had dispensed with Blackheath en route. In what was a competitive final and going into the dying minutes it looked like TJs may get their name on the trophy for the first time, but Gravesend were not going to give up the trophy without a fight and some resolute and controlled play by the defending champions saw them keep the ball alive through several phases to make the decisive score and retain the cup 34-32.

In a Plate competition, again marred by withdrawals, both semi-finals were fully contested to leave a Thanet v Tunbridge Wells final; it was a match that very much went the way of the season's league encounters with Thanet convincing winners 58-5.



The Vase competition saw Kent 2 side Southwark Lancers defeat both Old Gravesendians and Anchorians on their way to the final where they took on a Sheppey side that had disposed of Sittingbourne in their semi. Going into the match hot favourites after a good season on all fronts, Sheppey were in no mood to allow a fairy-tale ending to the Lancers' first season in senior competition, and they put their opposition to the sword in convincing style 55-14.

The final of the Salver competition was like the Vase final, with Kent 1 pitched against Kent 2. The Kent 1 champions Ashford took on Orpington and the gulf in quality showed; as the class act from Kent 1 had too much fire power for the Kent 2 side

In the regional Evergreen Cup competition, this season saw the same raft of teams failing to fulfil their fixtures, something that is a 'bee in the bonnet' of the club's Fixtures Secretary *particularly when sides that withdraw from round one fixtures are admitted to the Plate competition*. Anyway, after only one competitive match & three walkovers, Maidstone progressed to their third final in four seasons to face Blackheath, who as they did last season, ran out winners 29-10, so not the convincing scoreline that everyone was expecting, especially given the *ad hoc* nature of the Maidstone line up on the day. Having watched some of the recent finals, and they have all been competitive affairs, I have a feeling that the participation of Blackheath and their raft of star players could kill this competition over the next couple of years. In the Plate competition it was ironic that defending champions Sevenoaks Acorns, after having chased silverware in the competition for so long, withdrew from their semi-final, leaving TJs (who had conceded their first round match in the main competition) to contest the trophy against Old Reigatians with TJs narrowly coming out on top by 20-19.

It should be mentioned that the date of this year's final was moved at the last minute and due to a clash with a club wedding, many of Maidstone's first choice players were unavailable to play. However, even with a less recognisable side, where many other players had stepped up to the plate to play against the 'red hot' favourites for the trophy, the club honoured the fixture. Perhaps some of the other entrants to the competition should take note.



LONDON & SE PROMOTION & RELEGATION SUMMARY		
LEAGUE	PROMOTED	RELEGATED
NATIONAL 2(S)	Ealing, Jersey	Newbury, Hinckley, Canterbury
NATIONAL 3(SE)	Barnes, Hertford	Basingstoke, North Walsham, Diss
LONDON 1(N)	Westcliffe	Stevenage, Tabard, Woodford
LONDON 1(S)	Tonbridge Juddians, London Irish Amateurs	Chobham, Tunbridge Wells, Wimbledon
LONDON 2(SE)	Old Elthamians	Maidstone, Purley John Fisher
LONDON 2(SW)	Guernsey, Trojans	Weybridge Vandals, KCS Old Boys
LONDON 3(SE)	Heathfield & Waldron, Charlton Park	Dartfordians, Cranbrook
LONDON 3(SW)	Teddington, Camberley	Lndn Sth Africa, Fordingbridge, O Wimbledonians, Petersfield
SHEPHERD NEAME KENT DIVISION 1	Ashford, Sheppey	Lordswood, (Old Olavians withdrew mid-season)
SHEPHERD NEAME KENT DIVISION 2	Guys & St. Thomas' Hospital, Shooters Hill	N/A

National Under 20 Championship

Like the RFU Knockout competitions this tournament is contested regionally in the early rounds. The county made a good start with wins over Sussex and Surrey to go forward as group winners into the regional semi-final. A narrow 28-25 win over Hertfordshire saw them take on Hampshire in the regional final, but just losing out 29-17 to the side that went on to defeat Leicestershire 28-7 in the national semis but then lost heavily to Gloucestershire (62-30 in the final on 14 May).



Gloucestershire U20s snuff out another Hampshire attack on their way to a comprehensive 62-30 victory

Photo courtesy of Leo Wilkinson (www.leothephotographer.co.uk) for more great shots check the Hampshire Rugby website



Cornwall outpoint Kent 34 -42 leaving our county side to prop up the Div 1 table.

Photo courtesy of John Beach (www.johnbeachphotography.co.uk) for more great shots check his gallery on <http://www.photoboxgallery.com/johnbeachphotography>

County Championship

The County Championship started with some of Kent's squad still involved in league fixtures and as a consequence they went down narrowly (33-26) away to Gloucestershire in their opening fixture in the Bill Beaumont Cup. The county's challenge for honours was effectively ended in the 7-48 home defeat to Hertfordshire, leaving the home fixture against Cornwall a dead rubber, with Cornwall having also lost their opening two matches. In the end the Cornish, traditionally a bastion of county rugby had too much for the Kent side and registered a 34-42 victory to consign Kent to bottom place in Division 1 (S). ***RH***



English Clubs Championship



First XV

John O'Brien Reports

Well, what a roller coaster of a season.

It was always going to be a mixture of events this year with a new coach, new players and a new league but our pre-season started well, and the first league game of the season was superb, but we ended up losing to a poor Deal & Bettshanger side the week after which really told the story of our season. Too many times we gave teams a head start, only for us then to come back fighting in the second half and show the style of rugby we can actually play but too often it was too little, too late.

Overall though, we have a very young and highly talented squad that is only going to get better and the pleasing signs are that everyone gets on and we socialise together, which shows the strength in the club.

I'm already looking forward to next season which will be my last and I just hope that all of the plans and players come through what looks like a tough pre-season and we get Maidstone Rugby back to where it should be, as one of the premier clubs in the county. *JO'B*



Second XV - Mustangs

Duncan McClintock

My first year skippering the Mustangs has been a season of highs and lows, but we are developing a solid squad that will go into the new season with confidence in their ability to play open rugby and close matches out. The 2010/11 season started with a series of close-fought losses. This was mainly due to finding the right combination of players to suit our style of play, but with one win in the first half of the season it was looking like a repeat of the previous two years.

It was after the break for bad weather and then Christmas that our season really started to get going. The introduction of Dan Foley, Alex Hadi, Ben Swinson and Ben Hunter boosted the squad and made us a competitive team in the second half of the season. As a squad there is a direct relationship between attendance at training and the results on a Saturday. As attendance at training increased we started to win games and we beat Folkestone and a good Old Dunstonians team twice each. But we also failed to close out some tight games and lost twice to the eventual winners Bromley, at home by 5 points, then by 2 points in the away fixture.



I would like to thank all the players that have represented the mustangs this season:

Ben Rookledge for his back row play and generally being a nuisance to the opposition all around the park.

Kieron Borde has played well in the centres making the hard yards and distributing the ball when needed.

Mark Thurgood, Nathan Fitzpatrick and Fred West have performed well in keeping the front row together, making sure we have front-foot ball to work with and making the opposition's life hard work.

And a big thank you to Alex Knight and Lurch for stepping in when I have been short during the week and have needed locks. The backs have contributed well by running strongly, with Tom McKulkin, David Rauax, Chris Tomlin and Jacob Lee all putting in solid performances throughout the campaign.

I also want to thank all the players who have stepped up to the mark at short notice to put their bodies on the line and play for us.

After a good run of results at the end of the season and with pre-season training starting soon, where there will be opportunities to compete for 1st XV places, I am looking forward to next season and aiming for promotion out of Invicta 2.

Last but by no means least I would like to thank Fin Davis for all his help and support over the season, even making a couple of appearances when needed. I wish him all the best for his new role in the club. I know that he will make a difference. Martin 'Mayhem' Maytum also has to be mentioned, because without his organisation and willingness to do some of the tasks that sometimes get forgotten, we would have struggled on match days.

Here's to next season. *McC*



Third XV

Disappointed but ready to go again

Maidstone Third XV did not, unfortunately, live up to their usual high standards this season as far as results were concerned, however, the spirit that was shown on the pitch throughout has been tremendous. We lost a number of key players to injury early in the season which impacted on the results we had. That said, every player that stepped in, from whatever side, carried themselves well and wore the club shirt with pride. We have won some very important games convincingly and it just goes to show that even though the old dogs are getting older, they can still produce some exceptional rugby when fit. Excellent wins were recorded against TJ's, Sevenoaks, Snowdown, Cranbrook and Medway but, as a team, we failed to capitalise on the return fixtures.

Jez Major was awarded the Player of the Year award for his consistency on the pitch and laying his body on the line for the team week in week out.

We can definitely learn from this season and it would be a good time to review how the teams are structured going forward, to ensure that there is more continuity and cohesion between the various sides in the club. This can only make us a stronger club and a more enjoyable place to play rugby.

I would like to say thank you, on behalf of all the players, to Roger Bentley for his continuous support every week (except for the two month mid-season trip to Thailand where you left us behind) as well as his weekly post-match analysis over a beer. Your support is highly appreciated Rog. Thank you.

We hope to be far more consistent next season, and with everyone's support, we will compete and win against those sides we came second to this season.

Have a great summer break. *ML*



Fourth XV

Andy Cairns tells how the Fourths turned it around



Saturday 25th September 2010 saw a new look Maidstone 4th team take the field against the perennial league favourites Sevenoaks Acorns. A loss on the opening day did not hide the obvious spirit and attacking flair in the new Maidstone team. The 4's continued to improve, naturally gifted in attack but often undone in defence. But we picked up wins against Lordswood and Weaving and then a big win against the hitherto unbeaten Leigh 1st XV which was the stand-out performance of the first half of the season.

The new year did not start well at all, our poor tackling affliction returned and we lost the first four games of the new year but things were about to change... and it was in the last of these losses away against East Peckham, where we went down by 30 points, that we came out firing in the second half and put 20 points on them, finally starting to look much more robust in the tackle and breakdown areas. From there, we went on a six-game unbeaten run. Wins against Gillingham, Leigh and Aylesford set us on our way to a great end to what turned out to be a successful season. We ended it in style with a home thumping of local rival's Weaving.

All in all, we won eight - lost eight with one draw. That saw us finish in sixth place, a solid mid-table position in a hard league.

We started the season with little more than a loose collection of players playing the odd game here and there and ended it with a squad of 25 all raring to go for the 2011-2012 season. A fantastic effort by all the players this season and we're all looking forward to the next one. **AC**



Fifth XV

Barbarians in good health

The 5ths' 2010/11 season, with new captain Tom Clarke at the helm, was very similar to the previous season (in which we claimed the club's team of the year trophy). The team, while comfortably placed in the league, however, will be slightly disappointed to have finished fifth just behind Hastings and Bexhill who we dispatched fairly comfortably at the Mote earlier in the season.

Numbers remained as healthy as ever, all of whom helped to accumulate over 400 points and 65+ tries for the season (though unfortunately numbers at training, mainly due to the midwinter snow and deterioration of the training pitch, dropped during this time and failed to fully recover).

League positions are just a minor part of the overall story and ethos of playing for this particular team however. This is evidenced by the fact that the team fulfilled all fixtures, league or friendly, for the season which is no mean feat for a fifth string and did not have to rely on large numbers dropping down from the higher echelons of the club, unlike some sides we faced! Indeed, on a number of occasions the skipper was faced with the tricky problem of having to juggle numbers to ensure everyone got a game (though perhaps not on the same scale as the Vets, when they faced us in the annual fixture, with their American Football style bench)!

Though there was not a full scale tour this season (according to tour supremo Trevor Bradley anyway), there was an overnight trip to Uckfield (whose first team will be in the same league as ours next season). Two entertaining 40 minute matches, with Hastings making up the numbers, were followed by copious amounts of Harvey's ale and watching the culmination of this season's Six Nations in their clubhouse.

Looking ahead, our coach 'Sergeant Major' Frost will be keen to ensure numbers at the pre-season training camp in June at the Giddyhorn Lane Recreation Ground in Allington will be back to last summer's levels. A warm welcome will also be waiting for any new recruits.

Finally congratulations to the 5th team club player of the year and Jimmy Mistry lookalike, Richard Nunn, who also topped the try-scoring charts, just edging out a couple of wizened old -timers.



Vets XV

Richard Weston recalls another memorable season

Taking over from Steve Vincent this season, my first task was to assemble a team for the annual Beer & Rugby Festival at Ashford in early September. Not sure how many games we won but we were successful in sinking plenty of ale.

This was followed by the annual cricket match against the 5th XV which reappeared this season after an absence of a few years. The match was keenly challenged by both teams with the Veterans coming out the winners, eventually.

Onto the rugby. After playing and losing six straight games, Sheppey at the Ditch was always going to be a stiff challenge, but one that, eventually, brought our first taste of victory for the season. Our French friends from Lille travelled over and an interesting game was on the cards until just five minutes from K.O. when they said "***we don't scrummage"!?***

We had one more win before Christmas and then came the white stuff, which pretty much cancelled any rugby from the end of November. The second half of the season started with a good run of victories, halted by a Gravesend side with so many players they pretty were much fielding a different team at the final whistle to that which kicked off.

Playing Anchorians for the Maidstone 4th side was a highlight of the season and winning was a great bonus, their 3rd team gained revenge by beating us in a friendly match though.

Our annual tour this year was to Derbyshire and we were blessed with fine weather, good beer and a great bunch of tourists. Playing Belper on the Saturday, winning and having a good time will remain long in the memory. The Sunday game against Lichfield ended up a much closer affair than the first five minutes seemed to indicate, as we gifted the home team a 12 point lead. We then came back, unfortunately just losing out in a match that was played in great spirit by both sides.



Paul Ehrhart on the occasion of what, we are told, was his last game for Maidstone.

Congratulations Paul.

The season saw playing numbers up but two retirements from the game, Steve Norton and Paul Ehrhart, although they remain part of what is a tight Veterans social group. Adrian Clarke was our player of the year, he has played some great rugby in a number of positions and always gave his best.

Onwards to a new season, even though we'll be a year older and will have lost another metre off our pace. ***RW***



COACHING MATTERS

Co-ordinator Des Diamond outlines his plans & progress to date

Since taking over the role of CCC in late March I have undertaken a number of crucial steps as follows:

- *Acknowledged the great resource set up by Andy Golding on the website. Not only is there a Coaches Corner, but it is full of useful information. As one of my objectives is to make coaches responsible for their own learning I am really pleased that this web space does exactly that.*
- *Met with the Club Chairman, Youth chairman and Director of Rugby to discuss policy.*
- *Completed an audit (as far as that is ever possible) of our club coaching staff. We have nigh on 50 people associated with coaching. This is a large body and, within the club, is second only in personnel to players. Investment in this group of people is crucial to the successful running of the club.*
- *Made e-mail contact with the group trying to establish exact credentials of all our coaches. In loose terms we have:
22 unqualified, of which I hope 18 will do a Rugby Ready course this summer;
8 have already qualified with RR;
2 have a Tag qualification;
15 qualified to Level 1;
4 qualified to level 2 and
3 with referee qualifications.*
- *Offered the opportunity to the 18 to attend a club hosted RR course.*
- *Observed the 1st XV coach and established an on-going dialogue of feedback and reflection.*
- *Attended a Youth Sub-Committee meeting.*
- *Had numerous e-mail exchanges with many of the coaches as part of the audit process.*

Over the period up to Christmas I intend to achieve the following:

- *Deliver appropriate qualification opportunities to all coaches.*
- *Make sure each coach creates a personal development plan.*
- *Reinforce or establish an agreed code of conduct for coaches.*
- *Emphasise how coaches must be role-models.*
- *Encourage coaches to have a close involvement and build rapport with parents in order to inculcate the same values that they as coaches are striving to develop in their players.*
- *Encourage a 'performance' mind set rather than a 'winning is the only thing' mind set.*
- *Meet as many of our coaches as possible.*
- *Observe and give feedback to 25% of our coaches.*

Notes from the Chair of House

Carol McKenzie takes over as 'She Who Must Be Obeyed'

After working behind the bar for the last couple of years I was approached to take over as Chair of House in January after Tracy stepped down. I accepted because I knew that I had the help of the club's fantastic bar staff and I knew that I would get their help and support. Thanks Helen, Liz, Corinne, Sam and Josh. Special thanks also go to Sarah and Caroline who have often stepped in to assist, sometimes at short notice.

So far, I have thoroughly enjoyed it although the job comes with a number of challenges. One of the worst being the breakdown of the heating system in what was a particularly cold winter. The unfortunate result of this little adventure was that the boiler had to be replaced. We have also experienced a number of electrical problems and several broken windows.

One of our success stories has been the number of parties we have had this season. This is a fantastic source of revenue for the club and it is hoped that we will have many more booked in for next season. Anyone who would like to hire the club premises for a party should contact me directly. We would normally advise that parties be held on any day other than Saturday. After all we are a members club and the players do like to stay on after the matches. Having said that, we have had a number of very successful Saturday parties and the players have ended up joining in, in fact, several thoroughly enjoying themselves especially on one 18th Birthday celebration where Donk, Charlie, and Chunk very definitely *joined in!* In the end, of course, it's up to how you want your party to go.

It has been brilliant to see so many people stay behind on a Saturday, from 1st team to Vets, for a few drinks, a little frivolity and music before heading off home or into town. I hope that next season we can continue this where we left off.

On a more serious note there are a number of things that need to be improved upon within the club house and the grounds. The first is rubbish outside the club house. I would ask every club member, whether aged 5 or 75 to take responsibility for the disposal of rubbish. At times it has been quite awful with litter and cigarette butts strewn carelessly on the ground. There are bins provided, so please use them.

Finally, I must mention the fabulous Mayhem. He is our Social Organiser and what a great job he has done. We have had a 'Start of Season Party' where the dressing-up costumes were hilarious. On top of that there have been a New Years Eve Party, a School Disco, an 'End of Season Party' (naturally) and one of the funniest nights was probably the Halloween Party, where 'Kangaroo Court' was held behind closed doors, with the players dressed as wrestlers (what, no photos? Ed.) perhaps not the best choice of costume ideas.

We are planning further events for next season and we'll publish the dates so that you can all put them in your diaries. There will be something for all, from the Senior Section to the Youth Section, where it has been nice to see some of the youth parents attending.

Here's to next season. *Carol*

Youth Section News

Sean McGuire details the section's Achievements & Ambitions

Having taken on the role of Youth Chair with approximately two months of the 2010/11 season left, the priority was to support the Youth Section through the close of the playing year and to capitalise on the great work that has already been undertaken by the previous post holder. Darren Mitchell, to whom I extend my thanks for his support and effort, ably steered the section through the major part of the season and the following reflects the enormous progress that has and continues to be made:

- *The establishment of our Tag Tornados, who are our U5 section, and who effectively are afforded the opportunity to be active, have fun and make new friends, all in the context of the sport of rugby.*
- *The continued growth of our Tag section, with the regular attendance each Sunday of 75 boys and girls from all backgrounds and ability.*
- *The broadening of our coaching and support teams across all the age groups, ensuring that we are providing the best support possible for each of our teams.*
- *Two of our age groups reaching the Kent Finals, with the U8s being runners up in the Shield Final and our U13s and U14s providing great representation at their Kent finals narrowly missing out at the quarter final stages.*
- *Successfully holding an Open Day in March, which resulted in 35 new attendees playing rugby for the first time, across several age groups.*
- *Hosting the Maidstone Schools Tag Festival, which saw over 25 teams from Years 5 and 6 play a knockout tournament on an afternoon of wonderful weather just after the Easter break.*

But of course, I am aware that our ability to achieve these feats and to be able to run rugby in all weathers, is only possible with the support of coaches, volunteers, parents and the support team in the club, my thanks and appreciation go to them for everything they have done over the last year. That said, now is the time to look to the future and activity continues at great speed. Along with the usual 'capturing of kit', finalising next season's fixtures and ensuring that all out RFU obligations (e.g. qualifications, CRB and welfare) are up to date, I will be looking to work with my fellow coaches across the Youth Section to:

- *Finalise plans for dedicated pitches for our Tag section (U5 to U8) at the end of the 1st XV pitch, so that they are ready for use next season.*
- *Mark out a new dedicated pitch for our U9s squad next to the 2nd XV pitch.*
- *Create dedicated pitches for our U10 to U12 teams in Mote Park which will be located parallel to the Somme.*
- *Refresh the three-year Youth Development Plan ensuring that it is aligned to the overall Club Development Plan.*
- *Continue to strengthen our links with local primary and secondary schools as well as Maidstone Borough Council, building on the success of last March's Open Day and the Maidstone Schools Tag Festival in April.*
- *Establish closer links between our senior teams, particularly the 1st XV, and the whole of the Youth section. I will be working closely with the Director of Rugby to ensure that there is a clear succession strategy in the medium term for our Youth Section players for the transition to senior rugby.*
- *Commence planning for the Maidstone Mini Festival currently scheduled to be held on 4th March 2012 - this will require support across the club to ensure that this is as successful as it can be.*



I genuinely believe that this is an exciting time for the club overall and, while we have a chance to take stock of last season, our focus must, and will be, to start to build for the short, medium and long term success of the club both on and off the field. **SM**

Under 9s

First contact, foreign aid & eggs

This season has seen a major development in the U9s. We started with summer training to introduce contact to the players who had just got the hang of the whole tag game. We had four weeks of training to develop the idea of bashing into each other and then came the Medway Festival. They attacked this with great enthusiasm and only then realised what it was like to have a large lump come hurling towards them at full speed. They survived and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

Amongst a variety of home and away training, we had the visit from Boitsfort. They have played contact from day one and were well drilled. Their coaches helped to introduce our players to a maul-based rather than ruck-based game. There was plenty of laughter (at the language breakdown) and tears (as their big lads ploughed through our smaller kids). We had two days with them and the players gained a lot from a different approach.



We had snow, rain and holidays and then we came to the Kent Festival. Lots of sun and the first real test of our players' ability to stick in their respective positions and deal with contact. We enjoyed the festival but did not make it through to the semis. We had to bail from the Westcombe Park Festival due to lack of numbers and so the Open Day was born. We had sunshine, lots of new children across all ages and plenty of fun. We hopefully now have enough players to guarantee a squad. Our experienced players got hands-on help from some first team players which they really liked and benefited from. It was all topped off by raw eggs being thrown around by excited kids (and adults). By a turn of fate, the Aylesford Festival was moved and so we were able to get enough players together, including a few of our newer ones, for the last bash of the season. We saw all the work from the season come together with good positional play, effective tackling and great team work.

We now have a few months rest before starting the whole show again.

Under 11s

Allan Crosbie describes an inspiring set-up

Everyone knows that the season really starts during the summer before, because there's always a new position or skill to learn for the next age group, and the step up is usually considerable. In May & June 2010 we introduced the backs to kicking and Locks to the scrum. The Locks have done a great job, tightening things up and providing control, though their definitions of 'jumping' and 'catching' still need some tweaking. Any kicking by forwards (that means you, Jack Green) was robustly discouraged, however to our complete surprise and utter delight, the backs very quickly learned to kick, and then not to kick... Mostly. Excepting the occasional enthusiastic misfire (Ollie W, Alex they've displayed great discipline and skill under the high ball, notably Mikey, Jacob Arbury and Chris Howson.

During the summer sessions, and again at the beginning of the season, we were fortunate to have a couple of guest coaches - John Hogarth for the backs and 'Dump Truck' (Andy) for the forwards. We've also expanded our 'full time' coaching team, welcoming Kayleigh from Aylesford Ladies, as well as senior club players, Ian Howson and Matt Ellesmere. We are extremely fortunate to have a coach to player ratio of 1 to 3. As a result the backs are now making excellent progress in both defence and attack, applying more thought to their positioning and responsibilities depending on what is happening on the pitch. The forwards' ability to act as a forceful unit is increasing, our rucking has improved tenfold and our scrum is rock solid for at least 60% of the time. As a team, the boys have demonstrated incredible strength in defence, putting in huge tackles and demanding serious payment for every try that gets through. We've also mixed it up a bit and played a few of the boys out of position - Jacob Arbury at Full Back, Mikey at Scrum Half, some of our multitude of wingers in the centres, as well as swapping boys round in the scrum and co-opting a couple of backs into the sharp end of the game. Not only does this give the boys a better appreciation of the game overall, it will hopefully allow us to more easily move them around, as they grow and develop through the next few years, into their 'natural' positions.

Overall we have tried to improve and consolidate the skills of the players we already have, continuing to live the community rugby ethos by making sure every player gets the chance to play irrespective of ability. We treat the squad as a whole throughout the year, only creating A & B teams where we have to, trying to give equal pitch-time to all (thanks to Alan's incredibly intricate spread-sheets), and staying well away from being driven solely by our results. We have not tried actively to grow numbers this year, beyond arranging quite a popular 'Ring a Friend' day. Unfortunately, it coincided with two of the wettest, windiest, coldest weekends in November... not the greatest environment for recruitment, and not many came back...



By and large, our 'equal opportunities' approach to embedding higher skill levels across all positions, irrespective of ability, appears to have worked well. A number of our newer players have taken great strides forward this year, but to be honest, one of the most pleasing consequences of this approach has been the visible increase in camaraderie between the boys and the 'new' sense of team spirit that is inclusive of everyone. I'd love to say that the coaching team planned it that way, but we didn't. The lads are growing into the game, beginning to take something more from it than simply two hours exercise a week. It's what rugby is all about and it really is a joy and a privilege to witness the transition.

I should also mention our social and fund raising efforts - Christmas fridge magnets to raise cash (Nat, Sam and Brian), a new gazebo (Paul Kelly, sponsored by Leonard Gould), training tops (Richard Jenkins, sponsored by New Line Learning), selling fried rice to all of Mote Park (Cheryl + everyone), and community grants from RBS, BT and the Local Masonic Lodge. As a result of our combined efforts we now have about £1,200 in the Maidstone Lions bank account - a seriously great job - thank you. We still plan on using the money for a tour, which will happen next year for sure. All I can tell you right now is that we're thinking dragons and daffodils...

So, it is fair to say that we have had a steady season in the U11s. We have become a much stronger squad on the pitch, have taken a big step up in the continuum from 9 to 12, benefited from some profitable teamwork on the part of our ever-loyal parents (that's great to see) and have had a stand-out performance here and there to remind the boys (and us!) what it feels like when it all goes just right. To pick just a few examples - at Medway we got through to the Plate Final, losing in the dying seconds to Medway themselves. When Boitsfort visited in November, we played strongly against all the teams present, losing by only two tries to the Kent Champions Tunbridge Juddians (who regularly win 6-0 against all but the best teams) and at the Kent Qualifiers we held Canterbury to a 0-0 draw in what was one of the best and most tense matches of the year. All of the parents and coaches are extremely proud of what ALL of the boys have achieved in the last 8 months - well done every one of you!

Each season the coaches vote on the main awards we give out, and the parents vote for their player of the year. I am delighted to be able to publicly announce that this year the winners were:

- *Most Improved Player - Jack Green*
- *Top Trainer - Mikey Grice*
- *Unsung Hero - Samuel Bannell*
- *Top Try Scorer - Alex Crosbie*
- *Contact King - Ben Tugwell*
- *Player of The Season (Forwards) - Ollie Shea*
- *Player of The Season (Backs) - Lex Ayling*
- *Parents' Player of The Year - Alex Crosbie*



When this article is published they will already have been presented, but I'd like to congratulate the winners once more for each having excelled this season - and remind them that the slate is wiped clean in September;-)

All that remains is to thank the parents for their support, my coaches for their continued dedication, and the boys for the heart and passion they display every time they step on the pitch - I can't wait until next season, but for now have a great summer. **AC**

Under 13s

Alex Craven reports on some satisfying performances

In early January, after the snow and frozen pitches, Maidstone U13s played their first game for almost eight weeks and the lack of match practice and training showed as we were edged 10 - 7 by a Darfordians side we had beaten handsomely two months before. But over the next few weeks, the team began to rediscover some of their early-season form, bolstered by a very good performance at Aylesford (arguably one of the top five U13s in Kent). At 19-17 down with only two minutes left, we were pushing for the winning score, when Aylesford broke away to score the decisive try. Other notable performances in the second half of the season were wins of 54-0 and 53-0 against Ashford and Whitstable respectively; coming back from 12-0 down to beat Beckenham 28-12 and a ding-dong season-closer, away at Whitstable, with Maidstone prevailing at 38-26.

We experienced mixed results at the tournaments. A creditable semi final in the plate at The Kent Cup Prelims, was followed, a couple of weeks later, by a great display in the Kent 7s. We topped our group (including 10-5 victory over TJs who were Kent Cup winners a fortnight before) finally losing out in the quarter final of the Cup.

Our end of season tour was a great success, three nights at Burnham-on-Sea in Somerset with great weather and even a win. The standard of rugby at this tournament was high and showed us where we should aspire to be in the next few seasons.

End of Season stats:

- *Played 18 (excluding tournaments) Won 9 - Drew 2 - Lost 7*
- *Semi Final of Plate In Kent Cup & Quarter Final of Cup in Kent 7's.*
- *Scored 66 tries Converted 35 times / Points Scored 400 - Points Conceded 247*
- *Player of the Year - Sam Skipp*
- *Players Player of the Year - Mitch Shephard*
- *Most improved player of the year - Harry Webster*
- *Man of the Year - George Quinn (most Man of Match awards)*
- *Highest Point Scorer - Harry Weatherburn*
- *Clubman of the year - Tom Richmond*

Thank you to the whole squad for making the season more successful than the coaches had hoped for way back in September, the players' attitude, performances and discipline have all shown improvement this year. Head coach Steve Oakley ably assisted by Ray Long, Richard Weston and me have worked hard, often through gritted teeth or whilst pulling out our hair, to produce a squad that, on their day, can compete with the best in Kent. The squad also has a fantastic group of parents who assist Steve in many of the admin tasks that make things run smoothly throughout the season, so a big thank you to Steve Buckland (banking and admin), Andy Gardiner (fixtures), Gareth Edwards (tour sponsor) and all the other parents who's dedication and support throughout the season make it pleasure to be associated with the squad. **AC**



Under 14s

Determination & commitment begin to pay off

Maidstone U14s saw a few more new players join the squad this year, adding both strength and pace which was needed. Everybody, parents and coaches, noted a huge step up in terms of commitment and desire to be on the rugby pitch this year. A number of boys enrolled for additional fitness training at the Tudor Park, and definitely reaped the benefits. What we all witnessed was a bunch of lads, who were all good friends, starting to play rugby as a team. They raised the intensity with every training session and in every match. They played some very tough games and were taught some very tough lessons on how to compete on the pitch and, towards the end of the season, coaches and parents all agreed that they had learnt from those lessons and were starting to impose themselves on other teams.

The last two matches were particularly memorable. On tour the boys played Camberley Rugby Club. A few of our key players were unable to take part, either through missing the tour or due to illness. Arriving at the ground, Camberley appeared to be a lot bigger than Maidstone and they were certainly well drilled. The preceding late night also meant a rather average warm up by Maidstone U14's standards but what followed was, arguably, the best game they have ever played, running in three tries to CRC's two. Every member of the touring squad played their part and provided an exciting match, proving just how good they can be when they really put their minds to it. Our final match of the season saw us travel to Edenbridge and, despite a convincing home win in their previous encounter, the boys knew they could not rest on their laurels, particularly as Edenbridge had been missing a few of their key players. This time a far stronger Edenbridge team took to the field. Both teams started with an intensity and determination that made for a very exciting match but Maidstone, once again, outplayed their opposition, despite some rather interesting refereeing decisions, and won the encounter. A fantastic way to end the season with all the parents there to enjoy it with the boys.

Everybody involved with the U14s this year has noticed a massive improvement in the boys, their desire to play rugby well both individually and as a team and in their determination to compete and win. All the boys raised their game tremendously and contributed so that each week we could see their self-belief getting stronger and stronger.

Singled out for specific awards this season were:

- *Drew Broster (Players Player)*
- *Thomas Chandler (Player of the Year) and*
- *Lewis Midwinter (Most Improved Player)*

however every boy deserved an award this season.

A big thank you must go to all the coaches and parents who made every effort to ensure that the boys' season was a successful and enjoyable one. Many thanks also to Neil Cole for yet another excellent tour. The bar just gets higher every season. Finally to the boys, we had ups and downs but we all have thoroughly enjoyed the season with you. Being a part of what you bring to the rugby field each week, be it in a match or at training, makes us all very proud. We all look forward to an even greater improvement and success next season.

Under 17s

Mixed fortunes in a disrupted season

The season resumed after Christmas with our final league match away to a strong Sittingbourne side. Our lack of training both before and during the Christmas break meant that we were very rusty and slow out of the blocks. As a result, we lost heavily - the day made worse by the fact that Henry MacDonald broke his collarbone on his debut for the team.

Friendly matches against Folkestone and Dover followed the first was lost and the second won.

We progressed to the knock out stages of the Kent Plate and were drawn away against Whitstable. In the teeth of a gale we played out a 5-5 draw and progressed to the next stage on the toss of a coin. In the next round we found ourselves up against Tonbridge Juddians who were back to near full strength following unavailability during the initial league section and we suffered another heavy loss.

The season concluded with two friendly fixtures - the first a well supported Friday Night game under the Floodlights at Aylesford, which we started well with Ryan Shardlow Wrest scoring in the first minute. The defence was superb but as the team tired in the second half Aylesford scored two tries and beat us 15 - 7.

The final game was against Westcombe Park's second team which we won well, playing our best team rugby of the season. **JD**

The Shop

Kevin Bailey's ever-improving emporium of club clobber



Firstly a big thank you to the membership of all sections of the club for their support and purchases via the club shop during the season. In conjunction with our Team and Sportswear Partner, Samurai, the 'Club Brand' is now well established and the personalisation of garments has been a popular innovation. We are always looking to expand the range of garments and welcome any suggestions.

In order to try and address our biggest issue with regards to the procurement periods and delivery of bespoke garments ESPECIALLY JUNIOR PLAYING SHIRTS AND HOODIES, an order will be organised and placed around mid to late June so that these will be hopefully available in September towards the start of the season. Please note that the shop will continue to stock Junior playing shirts but by pre-ordering you are guaranteeing your requirement.

We are currently awaiting confirmation of the new prices from Samurai (increases are due to cotton prices) but anticipate that the cost for next season for BOTH Junior playing shirts and hoodies will be:

Up to Medium Boys (34" chest) - £33.50 each

Large Boys (36") to 5XL (54" chest) - £40 each

The complete range of chest sizes for both playing shirts and hoodies is:

Baby @ 20" (!) to 5XL (54")

All enlarge by chest-size increments of 2".

The Club Shop will only stock sizes from Junior (28") to Large (44") any other size must be ordered specially.

Orders are subject to a £20 deposit per garment
For further details please contact Kevin Bailey:
baileyk@walter-lilly.co.uk or on 07764 245756

Turn the page for details of the full range:



The range of goods available from the shop will continue to include:

- *Club shorts and socks (junior & senior)*
- *Ties*
- *Umbrellas*
- *Club No 1 Shirts (special order – approx 2/3 weeks - minimum order quantity applies)*
- *Club Jumpers (special order – minimum order quantity applies)*
- *Match day bags and boot bags (special order – approx 2/3 weeks)*
- *Hoodies (special order – approx 8 weeks - minimum order quantity applies)*
- *Junior Playing Shirts*
- *Hamilton Tops*
- *Tracksuits*

One possible change being contemplated for next season is to either change the colour of the No 1 shirt completely (it has been blue for many a year) or possibly offer the shirt in a range of colours (depending upon demand) – any feedback on the proposal would be welcomed.

Second hand shirts/boots etc. – if anybody has any reasonable condition second-hand playing kit or boots they wish to donate to the shop to be sold to raise additional funds and help anybody wishing to play but is 'financially challenged' we would welcome any contributions, once we resume our tenure of the clubhouse from the Cricket in September. Whilst the request is more applicable to our Junior section (given the rate they grow at!) any reasonable condition kit would be accepted. **KB**



Website

Bob Hayton reveals some interesting factoids

This season was the second with the website in its current format and the improvements and additions made last year appear to have been well received, although there is still work to be done. As was the case last year it would be wrong of the club not to recognise the efforts of those who have been crucial to both its construction but also its ongoing maintenance, in particular Mike Gammon. Mike will be taking a step back from the day to day workings of the site next season, but is putting in place what is called a 'content management system' that will allow a wider group to add or amend information to specific pages more promptly. However, he will still be available in the background to provide guidance and advice when required.

Additionally, Richard Ewence also puts in a lot of unseen work on the website, although his 'Weekly Round Up' is the most visible contribution, and apparently the publication remains eagerly anticipated on Monday mornings in various parts of the globe, Chris Lindley in Kenya and Charlie Flynn in India, to name but two.



The gallery, now in its new guise, also gets a lot of traffic but without volunteers to forward photos it would not be the success it has been; in particular I would thank Dave Wetjen who comes along when son Tim is back from university (and at other times, Bob - Ed.), and especially Mollie McKenzie who has been ever-present at the club to take photos and has produced some superb shots of the various XVs; and she's still only 14. Although the gallery appears to have been well received, there still remains a lack of photos forthcoming from the various mini & youth age groups; whilst this is a time of social distrust in respect of photos of children placed in the public domain, I'm sure that some photos could be forthcoming to create a truly inclusive club gallery.

The web team will be meeting over the course of the summer to look at ways of improving and developing the website, and some suggestions have already been offered. However, regardless of what changes may or may not be made, the site is dependent on various contributions to populate it and maintain its currency. The Club News section, in particular, has been a great way to let the membership know what is going on. Again, as was the case last season, the only disappointment in this regard, has been the limited number

of contributions from the Youth Section. Every age group must have had some achievements and notable events (for example SDD, Festivals, League Fixtures, Tours, and Sponsorship) that they could have shared with the rest of the club and wider community. I also know that Richard Ewence is keen to see a youth equivalent to the 'Weekly Round Up', either as a separate entity or that could be incorporated into the current format. However, from both a 'Club News' and 'Weekly Round Up' perspective, each age group has to be proactive, it is far easier for a representative from each team to forward a brief paragraph or article (plus photo) for inclusion, than it is for someone else to make up to a dozen phone calls every Sunday evening. Whilst I realise we all perceive ourselves to lead busy lives, if you don't blow your own trumpet, no one else will.

MFC Global

I mentioned earlier in this piece about Richard Ewence's 'Weekly Round-Up' being viewed across the globe. Thanks to the use of the Google Analytical facility I have again come up with some statistics and other information about the club's website (as at 26 April 2011) since the start of the season on 1st September 2010.

The website has had just under 50,000 this season from just over 16,000 visitors in 91 countries. Outside of the traditional rugby playing areas (Europe, South Africa, Argentina, Australia & New Zealand) the site is viewed in many different countries, including China, Columbia, India, Iran, Kenya, Thailand, UAE and The Philippines.

The website has an average of circa 1400 hits per week and 31% of hits are new viewers. Most viewers are on the website for at least 2.5 minutes and the most viewed pages are:

- ***Home Page @ 26%***
- ***Men's Rugby @ 11.5%***
- ***Club News -@10.2%***
- ***Weekly Round-up - 6.7%***

For the real computer geeks amongst our membership, the visitors to the website used the following software:

- ***Internet Explorer - 65%***
- ***Safari - 16%***
- ***Firefox - 11%***
- ***Google Chrome - 6%***
- ***Mozilla - 1%***
- ***Blackberry 1%***



Sponsorship Matters

Our sponsors continue to stand by the club

Towards the end of the season the club briefed its sponsors on the plans and preparation for next season which have been under way for some time.

In addition, following discussions that have been taking place over the past weeks, Maidstone Rugby is pleased to announce the continued support of all of its current sponsors. Primary Sponsors **Brachers LLP** continue their partnership with the 'County Town Club' whilst **Aylesford Newsprint** have also renewed their support as official sponsors, local company's **Crowe Clark Whitehill** and **Glosrose** have increased the level of support that they provide to the club.

Glosrose MD Jake Butcher commented "Despite what are difficult economic times, it is still important for local companies to try and put something back into the community and supporting grassroots sport is just one of the ways in which we can do that".

In addition to the renewed support of the club's current sponsors, local timber products company **L & G Forest Products** has also joined Maidstone Rugby as an official sponsor. The club remains as one of official kit supplier **Samurai Sportswear's** associated clubs and has maintained its relationship with Surrey based **Vivid Associates** as its digital partner, whilst other sponsorship arrangements with **ABB Ltd**, **Alan Firmin Ltd**, **Britelite** and local estate agents and surveyors **Sibley Pares** are also set to continue for the 2011/12 season.

If you or your company may be interested in supporting high standard, community-based grassroots sport in some way then please contact Bob Hayton in the first instance.

Advertising - The Deputy Chairman's Challenge

As we now move into the closed season and a respite from the game for a couple of months, there will be those who administrate the club who will be working hard and unseen behind the scenes. One of those areas is sponsorship & advertising.

With shirts needing to be ordered in mid June for the new season, the key opportunities available are through advertising. Perhaps the highest visibility in respect of advertising is through pitch-side boards and in addition to getting a company seen, they also associate companies with supporting the community.

If the company you work for is, or may be interested then in the first instance please contact me (Bob Hayton – M: 07979 501433) with the name of the company and the person we need to speak to and we will do the rest.



Shirt Number & Match ball Sponsorship

For the past few seasons we have invited supporters to sponsor 1st XV shirts and the match ball. This can be done by individuals, couples, friends or businesses. Your name doesn't actually appear on the shirt but you are listed as the sponsor of that particular shirt number on the team selection page of the match day programme for the duration of the season. Additionally, your name is listed on the poster display of shirt sponsors in the clubhouse. There are 18 1st XV match and shirts available for the 2011/12 season.

In the case of match ball sponsorship, your name appears in the match day programme for the fixture of your choice and also on the match ball sponsors' display in the clubhouse. For Home league fixtures, there are 11 opportunities available plus any Home fixtures in the Kent Cup and RFU Knockout competitions.

If you or your company may be interested in taking one or more of these opportunities then please contact Bob Hayton in the first instance.



Annual Club Dinner & Awards

Friday 22nd April saw the annual club dinner take place for the third year at the Village Hotel with a good turnout from across the playing side of the club. After what has been a difficult season it was time to recognise and reward the efforts of those who have stood out on the field of play and also behind the scenes.

Most notable was the Harry Green Award which recognises a significant contribution to the club over a sustained period of time, for this reason this award is not presented on an annual basis. This year's well deserved recipient might well be described as 'the one that got away' as many were surprised he had not received it some years ago; so it was a great pleasure to see the award to go to Trevor Langley who, after many years is *still* working hard on the club's behalf.

A Vice Presidency was awarded to Dave Eiffert in recognition of his contributions to the club.

The key awards for on pitch performance, the **David Arnold Award** and the **Bernard Hinks Award** were presented as follows:

- *1st XV Player – Lee Thomson*
- *Other XV's Player – Duncan McClintock*
- *Non Player – Nick Williams*
- *David Arnold Award (Young Player of the Year) – Ollie Newton*

Finally the Centenary Cup for the team of the season was awarded to the 4th XV who had their most successful season for a number of years.

- *The Players Player awards were as follows:*
- *1st XV – Lee Thomson*
- *Mustangs XV – Ben Swinson*
- *3rd XV – Jez Major*
- *4th XV – Craig Tuffrey*
- *5th XV – Richard Nunn*
- *Veterans XV (The Mike Sharples Plate) – Adrian Clark*

Club Blazers

Following the introduction of the updated club blazer, there still seems to be some interest in producing another batch. Currently eight or nine members are on a waiting list should there be enough interest, but the project would need around 20 members to be interested to make proceeding a viable option. This is because the entire initial batch of material has been used and another bolt of cloth would need to be woven (i.e. enough for 20 blazers).

If there are any members who would like their name added to the waiting list but have not yet seen Bob Hayton, then please contact Bob in the first instance. Once a viable number of members have expressed an interest the project can move forward.



You too can look this stunning, all you need is a club blazer and rugged good looks - alright just the blazer then.