



# IN TOUCH



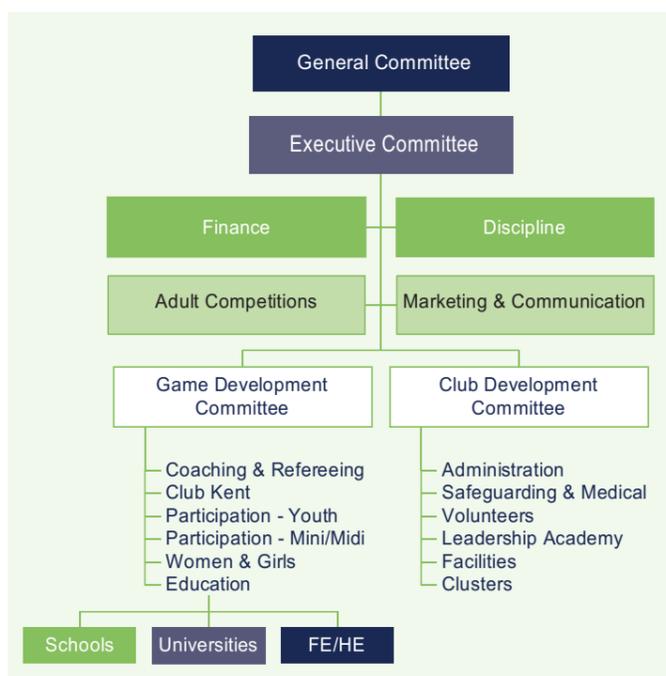
## What does Kent County Rugby Union do for you the clubs of Kent?

As a number of us have travelled around Kent to our 58 Member Clubs and met some of you, at Club Conferences, training events and the Leadership Academy we have regularly been asked about the way we are set up and work to help you operate and grow in your local communities.

In last January's In Touch we introduced you to a number of new faces who have volunteered to help with this work but an overview of what the county does is overdue. Our current 'Mission Statement' is: 'That the county works to ensure that more people play Rugby more often in more clubs, schools, colleges and universities in Kent.'

In order to achieve this a structure of Committees and key tasks exist supported by a part-time administrator operating out of the Kent County Council offices at King's Hill, West Malling. This structure and our administrator is there to support clubs to deliver activity that meets their needs and helps to grow the game. As many of you will know the administrator's job was carried out for some 25 years by Sylvia Taylor who retired in March and received an award for her great contribution to the County at the recent Awards Dinner held at the County Cricket Ground in Canterbury (see page 4).

Sylvia has been succeeded by Tracy Pettingale who combines the work of administrator with another role of helping to channel targeted RFU funding into the County to aid the development of the game we all love. During the county year running from July 1st to June 30th the Executive Committee (see diagram below) and has 10 Members oversees, guides and manages the strategic and operational direction of the county through a raft of committees and individuals.



It is our intention over the next few editions of In Touch to provide you with an explanation of the work carried out with and on behalf of our clubs by these committees and groups and also to introduce you to some of those who do this work.

To begin this process I will look at the Executive Committee role we have outlined above. The Executive has 10 Members and meets 6 times a year including a full day discussion of the direction of the county and future strategy. Those who sit on this group represent many of the key issues that the Executive have to deliver on and include: The President (Colin Blackham,) the Past President (Tim Fagg), The Secretary and RFU Council Member Mike Cordell and the Treasurer Peter Dessent. These are the 4 officers of the county. The Committee is chaired by Roger Clarke and the other members are David Clent Chair of Game Development, Mick O'Reilly Chair of Club Development, Andy Smith Succession Planning and Recruitment Manager- includes running of the county Leadership Academy, Robert Horner ex RFU president, and Jo Martin the RFU area manager for Surrey, Sussex, Kent and Essex.

This committee provides the link with the Sports Governing National body the Rugby Football Union and ensures that there is proper governance, funding, discipline procedures, facilities planning, safeguarding, training and volunteering across the game in order to run and develop it.

Even more importantly this role includes providing links with the clubs in relation to recruitment of players, variations of the game (7's, 10's O2 Touch) development of the women's and girls game, advice on a raft of issues including: the laws of the game, discipline issues, registration of players, ground maintenance, business partners, relationships with the local community and authorities, and vitally communications.

With 58 voting clubs within Kent we are one of the 8 largest constituent bodies within the RFU (Lancashire, Yorkshire, N Midlands, Notts, Lincs and Derby, Surrey, Middlesex and Gloucestershire being the others).

In the next 3 editions of In Touch we will go into greater depth on what Kent currently does for its clubs through its various committees and explore with you what you believe are the most important issues for you and the service you want from us in order for the structure we have outlined to deliver and match your needs.



If you have any questions or points to make on this article please share them with us at: [Kentrugbyoffice@the.rfu.com](mailto:Kentrugbyoffice@the.rfu.com) or on our Facebook page or on the County Twitter feed.

**Roger Clarke - Chairman of the Executive Committee Kent County RFU.**

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## Deal & Betteshanger Juniors' show the French how it's done

On Saturday 22nd April, Deal & Betteshanger U13s and U15s were welcomed to Deal's twinned town Saint Omer in France by the town mayor. Here they played their first international games against Rugby Club Audomarois (St Omer Rugby Club).

First to play, Deal & Betteshanger U13s were up against the local U14s and their first 15-a-side game, winning 7-57- a fantastic result for this young team!

Deal & Betteshanger U15s were up next, against the local U16s team, bringing it home with a winning 5-61!

This is an excellent result for rugby within our town, the players represented their club and town extremely well. We are all very proud each and every one involved.

In fact, the day was such a success that Russell English (Deal & Betteshanger) and Alan Fielding (Audomarois) hope to organise a return fixture in Deal next season!



Deal & Betteshanger U13s



Deal & Betteshanger U15s



## KENT RUGBY AWARDS

The Kent RFU Volunteer Awards invitational dinner was held on 7th June at Shepherd Neame Old Brewery Store, Faversham to celebrate the achievements of our volunteers in the county. Due to print deadlines, the awards will be covered fully in the next edition of In Touch, but we would like to say at big congratulations to all the winners!

## Greenwich RFC - What a difference a year makes!

Twelve months ago Greenwich Minis were coming to the end of their first season. We had twenty-odd players aged from 4 to 13, James Dixon, their solitary coach who hadn't had a Sunday off in a very long time, and Tony Smith, our club Chairman taking care of everything else!

Our kids were enjoying their rugby, but they weren't getting the focussed support that they deserved – clearly something needed to change.

Fortunately at this point a few parents volunteered to help. One AGM and a couple of phone calls to Mike Hollis (Kent Met RDO) later and we had a small sub-committee in place with a decent plan forming.

Since then it's all been pretty frantic! On the pitch we've doubled the number of players attending each Sunday and this has allowed us to train in 4 separate age groups, with first team players helping out regularly. Our U7s, U8s & U11s have played their first fixtures and we also joined forces with our close neighbours and new friends at Shooters Hill to give us the numbers to take our U7s & U8s to their first festival.

Behind the scenes, our volunteers have attended RFU courses in safeguarding, coaching and first aid. We've taken the 'Kids First' pledge and helped the club gain its accreditation.

We're really pleased to have come this far in a short period of time, but we have plenty more work to do. This September will see us launch youth rugby at the club for the changing needs of our players as they get older and move towards the 15-a-side game. Whilst doing this we'll also look to improve and grow our Minis section – more players, more coaches & more teams will mean more rugby and more fun for our kids!

On the senior level after a difficult season in Kent 2, we ended on a high winning the Kent Salver final at Canterbury beating Snowdown 17-7. We are looking to build on this win our 1st final in the club's history to attract new players for next season to recruit in our mini, youth and senior sections. We had the club's presentation night on Sat 13th May which was attended by the whole club, from minis to the 1st team, to build a one club, one shirt culture.

## Kent Clubs revitalised as the County continues to invest

The past year has seen a marked increase in both the financial support and advice that the county has provided to clubs at all levels of the game.

The County's Small Grants Programme (SGP) provides grant funding to assist all of the County's Clubs enabling the improvement of their facilities and pitches. The funding exists principally to provide a kick-start to major capital projects, but can also be used to support smaller projects should resources allow.

This year has seen great success already, with applications accepted for brand new pitch equipment, bar and kitchen flooring and spectator barriers. This couldn't have happened without the help of the Club Development Committee (CDC) who committed to spend the entire £10,000 budget for 2016-17. Along with a further £5,000 generously funded by the Executive Committee. This allowed clubs to submit planning applications for major capital projects such as refurbishing clubs' changing room facilities or even the building of a new clubhouse!

Further to this huge investment, the CDC and the Executive Committee, contributed an extra £7,000 (carried over from 2015-16) to eleven clubs that have assisted the county, by hosting county teams' training sessions and matches, and youth tournaments, for which the county is extremely grateful for their support.

To ensure we continue these improvements, we have undertaken an audit of Kent clubs' existing facilities and future development plans in order to assist the CDC and the RFU in identifying any future projects that could benefit from further funding programmes.

**We will be in touch before the new season commences with more information on applying for grants- good luck!**

## Inter County Sevens



1. Ebenezer Ikediashi (Beckenham)
2. Nick Doherty (Tunbridge Wells Capt.)
3. Steve Evans (Sidcup)
4. Bradley Saffery (Westcombe Park)
5. Alban Edwards (Westcombe Park)
6. Joe McEvoy (Blackheath)
7. Bryan Hotston (Old Elthamians)
8. Tommy Gray (Westcombe Park)
9. Reion Raybe (Charlton Park)
10. Hayden Pope (Tunbridge Wells)
11. Jordan Earle (Cranbrook)

**Coach: Nick Warren (Warlingham)**

Kent beat Surrey, Sussex, Essex and finally Berks to finish unbeaten and as the overall winners of the inaugural 7's County Championship.

## Kent U20's have successful run in Jason Leonard National County Cup

Playing in the upper tier of the Jason Leonard National Cup the team progressed undefeated from the pool with wins over Essex & Surrey and a hard fought draw against Hertfordshire with a squad at times short of some first choice players. The reward was a repeat of last season's Quarter Final against Gloucestershire, but this time with home advantage, and a very tight match was won at the death 27-25 with a long range penalty. The Semi Final brought Durham to Kent and another close match with Kent trailing for most of the game, before going down 26-18.

Eleven players were selected for the London & SE trial with seven successful – Jordan Earle (Cranbrook), Frank Reynolds (Tunbridge Wells), Jordan Stubbington (Medway), Tom Simmons & Alex Everett (Sevenoaks); Charlie Self & Will Luxford (Old Elthamians), with the latter selected for the England Counties U20 tour to the Netherlands.



## Kent Senior County Championship Season Bill Beaumont Cup Division 1 South 2017

Following the tour to Argentina at the end of the last campaign, which achieved a winning record, hopes were high for an earnest tilt at the Bill Beaumont Cup in the restructured County Championship. A favourable draw saw Kent in the same group as old rivals Gloucestershire and holders Cornwall, meaning that we did not have to play them! Our fixtures were against the three teams in the other Group – Hertfordshire, Surrey & Devon (similar to the Anglo Welsh Cup format).

In the first match at home to a very strong Hertfordshire XV, Kent fought doggedly after early setbacks and hung on to achieve a losing bonus point, 12-19, though late tries by Tom Stradwick (Blackheath) and Aaron Cooper (Canterbury), and a conversion by Frank Reynolds (Tunbridge Wells).

The following week, a magnificent forward effort, particularly in the front-row from Cooper and Sam Carmen (Sidcup), saw Kent ultimately overturn a nine point deficit at Dorking RFC, to take victory by the slenderest of margins and achieve a first ever success at the top tier of the competition. Surrey dominated possession and territory in the opening period and led 12-6 at half time, Kent's reply courtesy of two penalty goals by Reynolds. Handling errors hindered both sides early in the second period, but Kent's line-out had worked well throughout the match and this saw replacement hooker Harry Fry (Blackheath) drive over from close-range to get within a point. A lapse in concentration allowed the hosts to extend their slim lead with an unconverted try, but an interception proved crucial, enabling Kent to up the tempo and attack with pace. As the Surrey defence tried to recover, Stradwick muscled his way over from 20-metres, which Reynolds converted to provide the lead with a few minutes remaining.

In the final fixture at Barnstaple RFC, the line out again worked very well, and this combined with a strong scrum allowed Kent to dominate play, albeit with no return on the scoreboard and unforced errors gave Devon a 17-0 lead at half time. However, it was a re-invigorated Kent that at last brought their forward power to bear immediately after the re-start. Exercising better control and ball retention, Kent achieved their first points though a Stradwick try, converted by Reynolds. This sequence was repeated on the hour with a drive from the set-piece. Devon replied with a penalty goal, but with six minutes left, Cooper burrowed over, and Reynolds' conversion gave Kent the lead for the first time in the match. Devon mounted a final effort, but in the dying moments a further Stradwick/Reynolds combination provided a bonus point as icing on the cake.

The contribution of five tries in three games by skipper Tom Stradwick was a remarkable personal achievement, as was the accuracy with the boot shown by Frank Reynolds, but the most satisfying aspect of the season is the commitment and enthusiasm shown by the 40 players across the three match day squads which is testament to the team ethos that coaches John Gallagher & Taff Gwilliam have striven to build. The pitch side team of Alan Thompson, Dan Horgan, Antony Clement and Nico Williams provided valuable support to the team. In addition, it is pleasing to note that Tom Baldwin was selected by England Counties for their tour to Spain. Also, Markus Burcham and George Oram, who with Tom featured in the Six Nations matches against Scotland and Ireland. Chris Wilkins continues in his appointment as Assistant Coach to England Counties.



## Tonbridge Juddians RFC - A season to remember!

**The 2016/17 Season saw every section of the Club recording success! It will long live in the memory of players and supporters of Tonbridge Juddians RFC.**

Having gained promotion to Women's Championship South-East 2 in 2015/16, the Ladies team at senior level finished 2nd overall. On top of this, they celebrated the call-up of 3 players to County and 1 player to National representative rugby - congratulations ladies!

The Club were delighted to be able to field 4 Senior Men teams providing quality rugby for serious and social players alike; some of which reaching the twilight of their playing career.

Winning the Zoo Sports Shield League 3 South, the Men's 2nd XV qualified for the knock-out phases. Unfortunately the team were defeated in the semi-final by Rosslyn Park RFC but what an achievement for making it so far in the competition! The 1st XV steamed on with a winning streak, placing first in National 3 London & South East and gaining promotion to Level 4 of the rugby pyramid for the first time in the Club's history! If that wasn't enough, the team went on to celebrate their wins with another at the Kent Cup Final 62-3 against Sidcup RFC the following weekend!

What a year it's been for whole-club successes.

The Academy and Junior Section continue to develop exciting players for the future, demonstrated impeccably by the U17s winning the Kent League, Kent Cup and the National Cup!

The transition of players from the Academy into the Senior squads (including the 1st XV) has been a pleasure to follow. Current 1st XV players have been integrated into the coaching ranks and all went on to enjoy a successful end of season tour to Coventry.

Moving on to the Minis, where numbers of participants just keep on growing - with 250 now attending on a Sunday morning. Each age group has achieved their own successes but the U10s rose superior, sweeping all opposition aside!

The social side of the Club continues to thrive with tours throughout the age groups, quiz nights, sportsman's dinners, beer festivals and so much more. Plus the entire Club has benefited from new all-weather playing and training facilities.

**All in all, the best year yet for TJs...roll on 2017/18!!**



# Spitfire Gold Veterans Trophy finals day

This year's tournament finals were brought forward by a month to the 19th March, and were well worth the wait! What a feast of rugby the eight teams in the respective finals served up. Kicking off the day were the Bowl and Shield finals with Sittingbourne and Sheppey contesting a Swaleside derby in the Shield final. Having gained the advantage by half-time lead, Sittingbourne were victorious, withstanding a thrilling second half comeback from their local rivals to take the trophy 17-10.

Meanwhile in the Bowl final, Aylesford Bulls took on holders and three time finalists New Ash Green. Despite being first on the scoreboard it was the holders that demonstrated their previous championship experience, victorious 26-5.

The plate final in contrast was a hard fought affair contested by Ashford and Metropolitan Kent's Westcombe Park, both making their tournament debuts this season. In what was a great advert for veterans rugby, Ashford appeared the dominant side, administering constant pressure on the Westcombe defence. But Westcombe Park remained resolute, and combined strong defence with clinical execution to take the trophy with a 17-12 win. A result that did not necessarily reflect the amount of pressure that the opposition had exerted on their line, but demonstrated the epic performance put in by Westcombe Park's defensive line.

The Cup final would prove to be the pick of the bunch contested between the holders Sevenoaks and previous finalists Thanet Wanderers. In what was a full blooded contest, the game swung back and forth, twisted and turned. It was Thanet that were first on the scoreboard, establishing an early lead. It wasn't to last as Sevenoaks came back to lead 24-12 and Thanet appeared to be dead and buried going into the final quarter. Remarkably, Thanet then posted 19 points from 3 tries to establish a 7 point margin, with a minute to play. It seemed all but over, but Sevenoaks were by no means beaten. Mirroring their dramatic finish of the previous year, Sevenoaks created yet another as they broke out of their own half from the re-start to score under the posts, the conversion bringing the final scores level at 31-31.

It was Thanet however that took the trophy under competition rules by virtue of their scoring five tries to Sevenoaks four.

With this being the third year of the tournament its popularity grows as it continues to expand, with the Metropolitan Kent clubs joining the tournament this year and it looks likely to increase to 32 clubs for the 2017-18 season.

Finally, congratulations to all the finalists for a fantastic day of rugby and thanks to all the volunteers at the club for making the day such a success. Finally a big thank you to the tournament sponsors Shepherd Neame who remain instrumental in supporting grassroots rugby across the county.



Cup winners



Cup winners



Bowl winners



Plate winners

## Sylvia Taylor retires after 25 years service

Sylvia Taylor the County Rugby administrator for 25 years retired from this role at the end of March.

A range of celebrations of this record were held including Sylvia's own party with work colleagues, a presentation by the Kent School's Union at a Twickenham event and at the KCRFU awards Dinner at the County Cricket ground at Canterbury in May.



Pictured are Sylvia and Kent President Colin Blackham after the presentation of a silver Kent horse brooch which was made at awards night. A speech of thanks was given by the County Chairman Roger Clarke before Colin made the presentation in the presence of Kent Clubs and the President of the RFU Mr Peter Baines.

In reply Sylvia recalled the highlights of a long and successful time with the County where her presence at a raft of events including player development days went much further than the call of duty and demonstrated her total enthusiasm for the game. We look forward to seeing Sylvia at a range of county activities in the future and also welcome her successor Tracy Pettingale who is already known to many through her activities as a senior referee and as our co-ordinator of funding from the RFU with our spending committees.

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# SEN Rugby Programme expanded



Kent Rugby has widened its SEN (Special Educational Needs) rugby programme this year with the support of funding from the Wooden Spoon Charity.

Former RFU Community Rugby Coach and now freelance rugby coach Darren Reeves is project leader for this great innovation.

Darren has been involved with delivering the SEN Tag Rugby Festival held each year, but with the support of Wooden Spoon, has this year been able to deliver coaching sessions in schools.

Schools from across the county were given the opportunity to sign up to receive free coaching from Darren, the first ten schools that did also received a free bag of equipment.

A total of fifteen schools signed up, and not wanting any schools to miss out, Kent Sport were able to provide additional funding to buy more rugby balls for all the schools involved.

At the end of their coaching sessions, each school is invited to attend a localised festival of rugby where participants will be able to take part in warm up games, skills sessions and then play fixtures. A final celebration festival is planned for July to which all schools have been invited.

Leigh-Anne Cook, teacher at The Malling School who have been receiving coaching sessions said 'The Tydeman Centre is keen to develop sporting links with outside agencies to help us continue to develop our student's confidence through sport. The Tag-Rugby training sessions has given them a chance to experience a sport that they would not normally have the confidence to join in with. As a result, they have started to grow in confidence and are looking forward to the festivals in June and July.'

In addition to the SEN rugby sessions, Darren is also training Sports Leaders from secondary schools to support with the delivery of the festivals.

For more information on the Kent Rugby Wooden Spoon programme or to find out how to receive SEN coaching sessions at your school, please contact Darren Reeves at [dreevesrugby@gmail.com](mailto:dreevesrugby@gmail.com).

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# The Kent RFU Partner Programme

The Kent RFU Partner Programme has been designed to encourage businesses and organisations to become involved with rugby at grass roots level, with the aim of ensuring greater contact between the clubs and partners that can add valuable business and community experience to both parties.

In line with the current RFU and Rugby World Cup 2015 legacy aims, the Partner Programme will deliver a high degree of business and community acumen to rugby in Kent and at the same time allow the Partners the opportunity to extend their sales and marketing opportunities to a large and varied rugby audience.

Partners are also guaranteed that there will be no other competing businesses or organisations in the county programme, although clubs are free to choose who they wish to work with.

Complementing the current Kent RFU sponsorship arrangements, the Partner Programme will ensure that companies and organisations will have available to them dedicated channels of communication to all clubs in Kent.

For more information, visit [www.kent-rugby.org/clubs/development/kent-rugby-partnership-programme](http://www.kent-rugby.org/clubs/development/kent-rugby-partnership-programme)



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## RFU Knockout Competitions



In the **RFU Intermediate Cup** Charlton Park made it three years in succession for one of the county's sides to reach Twickenham in this competition, unfortunately just coming up short on the day against a West Leeds outfit that were making their third consecutive visit to HQ. Beckenham and Colfes fell in the third round with Beckenham falling to Charlton Pk, whilst Deal & Betteshanger went out in Round 2, with Bromley and Dartfordians falling at the first hurdle.

In the **RFU Senior Vase** it was Thanet Wdrs who got the furthest as they exited the competition in the 3rd round, going out to the regional Runners-Up in O Cranleighians. Aylesford Bulls fell in the 2nd round to eventual Twickenham finalists Farnham, with Sheppey exiting in the first round with a heavy defeat to Sussex club Pulborough.

The **RFU Junior Vase** none of the county's clubs were drawn in the first round, although Vigo were the first to leave the competition as they fell to a defeat by fellow Kent club Snowdown CW, in round 2 with what was probably their best result of the season. Both they and Sittingbourne fell in round 2 leaving Cranbrook and Beccehamians to carry the county's flag, although Kent 1 club Hastings & Bexhill were still very much in the competition and were to take Beccehamians scalp in the next round. Cranbrook also went out in 3rd round, falling to O Whitgiftians who were to go on to the national semi-finals.

## Shepherd Neame Kent Cup Competitions

Most of the competitions this season progressed without as many withdrawals as in previous seasons. Unfortunately this season's finals threw up a series of one sided contests, with only the lowest tier **Salver** final between Greenwich and Snowdown being a real contest. A tightly contested first half saw Greenwich to a 14-7 half-time advantage, and with addition of only a single penalty in the second period they took the trophy 17-7.



In the **Vase** it was really one-way traffic as Kings College Hosp, whose form had deteriorated since the end of February were on the receiving end of an 82-0 thrashing by Beccehamians.

The **Shield** final was contested by Medway and Charlton Pk, with Medway adding the trophy to their league title with an 83-7 victory against a Charlton Pk side that had a number of players away on tour and one eye on the following week's Twickenham Intermediate Cup final.

The **Plate** final was a local derby between two sides whose fortunes had differed since their last meeting two seasons ago. In the end the county town club from Maidstone had too much firepower & experience for the near neighbours Aylesford, running out to a comfortable 58-14 victory to retain the trophy they won last season.

The main **Cup** final saw Nat 3(SE) champions Tonbridge Juddians pitted against London 1(S) champions Sidcup in what was expected to be a competitive encounter. In fact it was quite the opposite and despite the endeavour of Sidcup's play their opposition proved to be too well organised for them. Whilst the first half was competitive with TJs holding a 19-3 advantage at the interval, their superior power and pace proved the difference in the second half as they added 43 unanswered points to romp to a 62-3 final score to take the trophy for the second time in 3 seasons.

# Folkestone win coaching session with 6 Nations Champions!



Out of a number of clubs involved, Folkestone RFC have been unveiled as the lucky winners of Natwest's Rugby force draw. Whilst filling out the annual NatWest Rugby Force application form, I couldn't have anticipated that a few days after completion an email would arrive inviting Folkestone RFC to send 20 players and three coaches to a training session at the national team's Training base in Pennyhill Park, Bagshot. The session was led by RFU Community Coaches, plus three current England Squad members, available due to a two week break in the 6 Nations.

There was excitement all-round the rugby club as players and coaches discussed organising time off work, and wondering which of the current England squad members would host the training session! It was agreed to send a cross section players from our senior playing sides; covering backs, forwards and fortunately each captain of our current three senior sides were able to be part of the group. Club Skipper, Jon Morton co-ordinated the mix of players to attend, and on a beautiful Monday in late February everyone arrived at Folkestone Rugby Club for a "full English" breakfast, prepared by our caterers Mike & Stacey, in preparation for a what was expected to be a demanding session at Pennyhill.

Upon arrival at Pennyhill the team was blown away by training centre! Situated in the grounds of a beautiful hotel and spa, with a full size pitch and state of the art training facilities gave an indication of the quality of provision lavished on those playing rugby at this elite level. On arrival the group was greeted by the Synergy Global event team, then the Community Coaches, Chris Dodd and Henry Birch. Finally the England Squad players were revealed as Nathan Hughes, Kyle Sinclair and Henry Slade. As an unexpected bonus, the group saw a number of other England players working in the gym including Mako Vunipola and Maro Itoje, both busy preparing for England's next match versus Italy.

When it came time to warm up for the session, the group was split randomly and set a series of hectic, running and passing activities. Afterward the group was divided into more specialised coaching groups of forwards and backs led by Kyle, Nathan and Henry respectively. After a couple of hours of hard graft, our guys were pretty tired! But they remained energised by the sheer inspirational skill and technique of the England players and coaching staff. After the gruelling session, the group received a tour of the indoor training centre and its incredible facilities. The group was wowed by the cutting edge fitness equipment and the incredible technological sports hall equipped with computers and video apparatus to analyse all aspects of play in planning strategies for matches.

After such a once in a lifetime experience, how else could the afternoon end but with everyone in the group on a "high!" Apparently, Eddie Jones was on site, in his office, but we were advised better than to disturb the England boss!

**Thanks must go to NatWest Rugby Force, Mitsubishi and England Rugby for making this fantastic opportunity possible for Folkestone Rugby Club.**

## Younger players continue to make the news at Thanet Wanderers

**In Chairman Danny Clement and Vice Chairman Andy Letts, Thanet Wanderer's has one of the youngest pairing of Senior Club Officers still playing regular First XV rugby in England. It should come as no surprise therefore to find other young people playing important roles at the club.**

At the recent club supper, Club Captain David Lemon played tribute to the important part played by many of the club's U18's involved in Wanderers' three senior sides during the successful 2016/7 season. He presented the cup for young player of the year to 18 year old outside-half Zac Ward who topped the 1st XV points table with 149. Ward was closely pursued by 17 year old Charlie Knight who scored an incredible 26 tries from 18 starts. Due to their significant involvement in Wanderer's senior rugby, the U18 Colts, under coach Adam Mirams, joined together as a team only once, and still won the U18's Kent Sevens tournament at Medway remaining unbeaten - an incredible achievement!

The 1st XV player of the season award went to a comparative veteran lock forward, Brad Turner, at the ripe old age of 21! Turner will graduate from Christ Church Canterbury this summer after two outstanding seasons with the club.

And of course it was yet another dedicated young Wanderer, Nathan Stout that was awarded the honour of club-man of the year. Having come through the junior ranks, Nathan has demonstrated the utmost dedication to the club, having played senior rugby since his seventeenth birthday and prior to that being the first XV touch judge.



# Maidstone's Future in Focus



In a difficult year for many teams at youth level, joint Youth Chairs Dave Tugwell & Eva Howson have worked tirelessly with coaches and players alike this season. Focussing hard on integrating the youth system continuously into the senior section is difficult for any club, especially as higher education beckons for many aspiring talents. The fruits of their labour and collaboration this year with the coaches and players is nothing short of a stellar achievement.

The U13 squad with lead coach Tim Hedges secured the Kent tankard for their age group, demonstrating the growing attributes in the clubs youth teams.

Lead Coach Jamie Mills has also been working closely with the joint Youth Chairs to get the U16's ready for that final step before senior rugby. The U16's themselves had an exceptional league run and finished the season with the squad travelling down to Ashford for the Kent Cup final against holders Old Elthamians. In the crisp spring sunshine, a very competitive and enjoyable game ensued. Maidstone look assured against a very strong Elthamian side and their resolve held firm after a late fightback to take the cup 22-18.

The U17 squad finished off top of the league winning 10 out of 12 matches and travelled to Ashford to compete for the Kent Plate against Canterbury. This was a very, very, close affair. For a neutral it proved to be a fantastic advert for the next generation coming through the county. On the day, Maidstone managed to pip Canterbury to the post 21-18. The U17's has also been integrated with some of the senior training this season, to keep their Rugby education flowing.

The squad will now enjoy a little break and will make up the core of the 2nds next season, as they look to break eventually into the 1st XV one day. Lead coach Allan Crosbie is already working with the senior sides on the graduation structure along with Dave Tugwell & Eva Howson. The structure will hopefully allow the U16's to follow the route in a couple of years' time. The future of Maidstone FC is looking bright with these lads.



# Folkestone U13 Girls and the All Schools Programme



Folkestone RFC U13s

**The Marsh Academy & Folkestone RFC are coming to the end of their first year of chapter 1 in the All Schools Programme. Folkestone coach Danny Vaughan has worked with two very enthusiastic teachers at the Marsh Academy; Steve Doughty and James Lunnun, both of whom have been awarded Level 2s in Coaching.**

The club's Mark Santer has been the positive driving force for girls Rugby since his own daughter Ellie took an interest. Mark and his daughter have completed their Level 2 in coaching, and have since formed a strong coaching partnership overseeing girls' rugby. Ellie continues to expand her rugby knowledge, now working on behalf of Canterbury RFC in the community, and completing her degree at Canterbury Christ Church University.

The school has 24 pupils from this year, who are now members at the club, whilst growing a U13s Girls team (10 games played!).

The increase of new players at the club comes as a direct result of this club-school mutual relationship. The club now has a strong presence at the school, through Danny and indirectly through teachers Steve Doughty and James Lunnun. Furthermore the club's use of school facilities on a weekday and weekend has attracted youngsters that would otherwise have found it difficult to become associated with the club due to its adverse location.

Danny's work is not isolated to Marsh Academy and Folkestone, he continues to expand the reach of girls rugby in Kent. Aimed at attracting yet more girls to the sport, Danny has travelled to Dover, Deal & Betteshanger (both in the All Schools Programme) to arrange training days and suitable fixtures, along with the Kent CB's Girls PU&P.

In an effort to maintain the success of the programme, Marsh Academy teachers hope to introduce a Pin Badge

reward system. Where students attend a certain amount of sessions at the club they will receive a pin badge for their blazer, which in turn will earn them house points. Other ideas have include the introduction of a club loyalty card and a club Rugby Camp for pupils during their "Activities Week" next month.

Next year, a number of the girls will be U15s. It is imperative the school and club sustain the U13s and continue to grow the U15s. Such will require an increase in coaching staff at the club to maintain growth and continue quality girls' rugby opportunities.



Marsh Academy girls

# Kent Clubs 2016/17 Round-up



Tunbridge Wells

In **National 1** Blackheath never really showed the form and consistency of the last couple of seasons, finishing 7th in the table. In a division where many regarded the promotion battle as a 'one horse race' Hartpury College took the title and promotion place by a massive 30 point margin from nearest challengers Plymouth Albion. At the foot of the table Macclesfield drop straight back down to Nat 2(N) after a torrid season, along with Blaydon and Hull Ionians; and with all three relegated sides going into Nat 2 (N) this has created some promotion anomalies further down the league structure.

**National 2 (S)** started as a battle between four of five clubs, in the end being whittled down to just three. Taunton; the early season pace setters fell off the pace in mid-season to finish fourth, whilst Bishops Stortford timed their run in to perfection, moving to the top in the last third of the season to take the title. The playoff place became a battle between O Elthamians and Chinnor with both always having been in title contention until a mid-season wobble saw Stortford move into pole position. Both went into the last day of the season locked together with Elthamians holding their nerve to take the play off place, as Chinnor fell to a surprising defeat. Elthamians then travelled to Manchester to take on a Sale side that finished runners-up o Nat 2(N) and in a tight encounter with a 14-19 scoreline took the prized promotion to Nat 1 and will lock horns next season with Blackheath. For the county's other representative, Canterbury finished the season comfortably in mid-table (8th) although they got off to a very shaky start, and it wasn't until a morale boosting 51-17 win over Henley at the end of October that they began to assemble a consistent string of results. At the bottom, relegation wasn't fully decided until late in the day, with Exmouth and Barnes being relegated and Barnstaple consigned to the third relegation place on the last day of the season but reprieved by the geographical implications of relegation from Nat 1.

**National 3(SE)** Having been contenders in most of the recent seasons, and losing out in the playoff last season Tonbridge Juddians were expected to be amongst the main challengers this season. so it proved; as in a promotion battle that involved a handful of clubs gradually whittled down to two contenders with Wimbledon the other leading challenger. TJs clinched the title and the promotion with a couple of weeks to spare whilst Wimbledon took the playoff place and went on to beat Dings Crusaders to also achieve promotion. Westcombe Pk finished fourth, having fallen off the pace in mid-season along with Hertford who were the other early season challengers. At the bottom, Amersham & Chiltern who were promoted last season having scored over a thousand points were consigned to relegation after a single season having conceded the same. Colchester also drop back down after two seasons in the division and Chichester's three season stay at level 5 also comes to an end.

In **London 1 (S)** after several seasons as the division's 'nearly men' Sidcup took their opportunity for league honours as they secured the title in late March, the challenge for the playoff position involved five clubs but eventually it was pared down to a battle between Havant and Tunbridge Wells which was only decided on the last day of the season; with Tunbridge

Wells then going on to defeat Chingford in the playoff in a nailbiting encounter that went into extra time. At the foot of the table Gosport & Fareham's reprieve last season did them no favours as they were anchored to the foot of the table from the outset, they were joined in the drop zone by Dover who after narrow escapes for the past two seasons eventually succumbed to relegation, as did Chiswick who return to playing their fixtures north of the Thames. Sevenoaks, Gravesend and Maidstone all were all mid-table, never really able to achieve the consistency to challenge the leading places .

In **London 2 (SE)** It was apparent from the outset that the leading contender would be Medway and they secured the league title and promotion in early March. The battle for the playoff position saw four Kent clubs in contention, although O Colfeians always appeared to be in control and went on to take the position and subsequent promotion by defeating Ldn 2(SW) club Camberley. Dartfordians, Beckenham and Charlton Pk all challenged but it was the late season clashes between the leading group that eventually finalised the order as the county dominated the upper echelon of the division. At the bottom Crowborough drop back to London 3(SE) as do Bromley to Kent 1 after only one season in the division where they struggled throughout. Deal & Betteshanger finished in lower mid-table but had flirted with the relegation zone alongside all the bottom half clubs throughout the campaign.

The battle at the top of **London 3(SE)** was always tight and Thanet Wdrs led the way for a significant part of the season, but a dip in form in the final third of the season took the matter out of their hands going into the last couple of fixtures as Sussex clubs Pulborough and Haywards Heath took the promotion places. There was keen interest in the bottom half of the table, with any one of half a dozen clubs that could have been drawn into the relegation battle alongside bottom club Ashford, who endured a torrid campaign. In the end the likes of Aylesford, Dunstonians and Park Hse managed to haul themselves clear leaving Eastbourne and Gillingham Anchorians who throughout the campaign had never quite managed to secure mid-table sanctuary, to drop to their respective county leagues.

As was the case last season the **Kent 1** battle for promotion proved to be very interesting with three or four sides battling it out at the season's mid-point. In the end Cranbrook and Beccehamians challenge faded, although the Wealden club were still just in contention in the final weeks when it had really become a battle between two contenders. Hastings & Bexhill always held the whip hand, and despite tripping up unexpectedly in the closing weeks to struggling Sittingbourne, they had enough breathing space to take the title with a week to spare from O Williamsonians who subsequently went on to defeat Sussex club Uckfield in the promotion playoff. At the foot of the table it was apparent very early on the Snowdown were struggling and ended up anchoring the table, the battle to avoid the second relegation place wasn't decided until the final weekend and involved three clubs, as New Ash Green (NAG), Sittingbourne and Brockleians all struggled. It was a run of three consecutive wins in the last three weeks for both NAG and Sittingbourne against three heavy defeats that saw Brocks drop to Kent 2 on the final day of the season.

## London & SE Promotion & Relegation Summary

### National 1

**Promoted:** Hartpury College

**Relegated:** Macclesfield, Blaydon and Cambridge

### National 2 (S)

**Promoted:** Bishops Stortford and O Elthamians  
(Playoff v Sale (Nat 2N))

**Relegated:** Exmouth, Barnes, Barnstaple (reprieved)

### National 3 (SE)

**Promoted:** Tonbridge Juddian and Wimbledon

**Relegated:** Amersham & Chiltern, Colchester and Chichester

### London 1 (N)

**Promoted:** Tring Playoff: Chingford

**Relegated:** Sudbury, Chelmsford and Barking

### London 1 (S)

**Promoted:** Sidcup and Tunbridge Wells

**Relegated:** Gosport & Fareham, Dover and Chiswick

### London 2 (SE)

**Promoted:** Medway and O Colfeians

**Relegated:** Crowborough and Bromley

### London 2 (SW)

**Promoted:** Ldn Cornish, Playoff: Camberley

**Relegated:** Warlingham and Portsmouth

### London 3 (SE)

**Promoted:** Pulborough and Haywards Heath

**Relegated:** Ashford, Eastbourne and Gillingham Anchorians

### London 3 (SW)

**Promoted:** Farnham and Eastleigh

**Relegated:** Bognor, Millbrook and US Portsmouth

### Shepherd Neame Kent Division 1

**Promoted:** Hastings & Bexhill and O Williamsonians

**Relegated:** Snowdown CW and Brockleians

### Shepherd Neame Kent Division 2

**Promoted:** O Gravesendians and Royal Bank of Scotland

### Sussex 1

**Promoted:** Crawley, Playoff: Uckfield

### Shepherd Neame Kent Cup

**Winners:** Tonbridge Juddians

**Runners Up:** Sidcup

### Shepherd Neame Kent Shield

**Winners:** Medway

**Runners Up:** Charlton Park

### Shepherd Neame Kent Plate

**Winners:** Maidstone

**Runners Up:** Aylesford

### Shepherd Neame Kent Vase

**Winners:** Beccehamians

**Runners Up:** Kings College Hospital

### Shepherd Neame Kent Salver

**Winners:** Greenwich

**Runners Up:** Snowdown

The battle in **Kent 2** saw four clubs fighting for the two promotion places as O Gravesendians took the title and return to Kent 1 at the first attempt with Royal Bank of Scotland taking the runners up place after a tight battle with Whitstable and also Fooks Cray, although their challenge faded in the closing stages and they finished in third and fourth places respectively . At the bottom Erith, who had rejoined the league this season, and Shooters Hill propped up the division with even the RFU points deductions not affecting their league standings. It was also evident that some clubs struggled for a variety of reasons, with a total of 19 match concessions were recorded in the division. In mid-table there was little to choose between the sides with just 8-points separating 6th to 9th places, with Dartford Valley posting their highest league finish so far.

Bob Hayton