



# in touch

## Saffron Walden Rugby Football Club

### Summer 2010

#### A few words from the Chairman

##### A vintage 2009/10 season for SWRFC!

As you will see from this newsletter, the senior teams enjoyed unparalleled success in their respective leagues and cups, and the junior section continued to offer a high quality rugby experience for our young players. Most importantly, we've had a really enjoyable time - surely the essence of a community based Rugby Club.

Looking forward to next season there is yet more we could achieve. The further successful development of the Club will require the involvement of more dedicated people, and in particular, we are looking for help in the following key three areas:-

**Fundraising Chairman:** A focal point for the Club's efforts to raise the significant sums of money needed to upgrade our clubhouse, playing facilities and coaching.

**Publicity Officer:** Ideally a local person with a little bit of spare time, to ensure the Club maintains a high profile in Uttlesford and beyond.

**Academy Manager:** A hugely important position in the proposed academy, overseeing the transition of the area's best local talent from school and junior rugby into the senior sides.

If you are able to help out in any of the above capacities, or any other way, please contact me directly using the details given below.

##### A Club in Development

The Club's Committee is very conscious of the need to maintain and improve the rugby experience for all those at SWRFC. We have identified a number of short-term issues that need to be addressed, and some significant improvements for the medium term.

With the refurbishment of the showers and toilets completed, we are focusing on safety compliance. One such area is the damaged power cable which feeds the Club and is the cause

of our ongoing electrical problems. We intend to repair or replace the cable and to upgrade the electrical services within the clubhouse itself. This will both make the clubhouse fit for purpose, and provide the electrical platform required to upgrade the floodlights on the training pitch. We are also planning to repair the damaged windows on the clubhouse exterior.

As the Club has become more successful, the number of people using our facilities has increased significantly. The pitches have become compacted, and this will be addressed in the off-season by mole draining and sanding. Also, we will be looking to install RFU recommended spectator barriers. The estimated cost for completion of the electrical, clubhouse and ground works is around £50,000. We have some funding in place, and are actively pursuing various sports grants and RFU loans to complete the work.

Thereafter we need to replace the changing rooms. This will be a significantly larger project, and we plan to have costed proposals available for consultation by the end of 2010.

We know there are people reading this newsletter who have skills which could greatly help us in our efforts towards improvement. One aim of this and future communications is to make you more aware of the club's specific needs and the way in which you can help. If you think you can be of any assistance with any of the above undertakings, please contact either myself or any of the Club's senior personnel.

To all the players, coaches, volunteers, parents, sponsors, referees and supporters alike, many thanks for your help and support during the last season. I look forward to doing it all again come September.

Best wishes

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#### Senior Rugby at SWRFC

- Top Four Finish in London NE2
- Cambs Cup Winners after 20 Year Wait
- Top of League Finishes for Saxons and Scorpions
- Saxons Achieve League and Cup Double

##### 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> Teams

Pre-season training saw the welcome arrival of several new faces, and it was great to hear that the new players felt that the club made them all feel welcome.

Playing in London 2 NE, the 1sts took a couple of games to settle in but things turned round after a narrow, hard fought victory at Harlow. The confidence grew and they started to play the attractive, fast flowing rugby best suited to the squad. They won 8 of the next 10 games before the Christmas break, including two good wins in the RFU Intermediate Cup - home against Hammersmith & Fulham and away against London Cornish in West London.

The poor post-Christmas weather heralded a difficult period for Walden, who like hard and fast playing surfaces, but with the increased depth to the squad they won 9 out of the next 15 games. Highlights were getting through to the London Area semi-final after beating Colchester in Round 4, and a fine end-of-season run with 4 wins out of 5 that sealed a fine

fourth place in the league. The last game was a hard-fought win against Wisbech at Cambridge RFC that clinched the Cambridgeshire Cup for first time for over 20 years.



**Cambs County Cup Squad 2009/10**

Meanwhile, the 2nds, playing in the GK Merit Table Premiere Division, made great strides after a disappointing previous season. As part of the Senior Squad, attendance at training was high, and this led to 11 wins out of 13 during the pre-Christmas period.

The second half of the season was much more difficult as the weather played havoc with the fixture list, and injuries took their toll. Notwithstanding this, the Saxons finished off a fine season and secured top spot in the league. With all players available they then completed the double when they beat Newmarket in the league cup final.

Special thanks go out to Director of Rugby John Read who brought all this together. His motivational skills are legendary, especially on a Saturday night at the Duke of York. 1st team captain Dave Philp was ably supported by Vice Captain Andy Lancaster, who also helped out with coaching some of the youth.

The 2nds started off being captained by Jack Trotti who unfortunately had to step down owing to a long term injury, and he was ably replaced by Sam Eardley who did a great job. Whilst there were some fine individual contributions throughout, the entire squad can take pride in a very successful season.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Team (Scorpions)**

The season got off to a terribly tragic start with the loss of friend and team mate Dave Sharp, who died whilst playing for the Scorpions v St Neots in September. "Sharp" will be sadly missed but never forgotten. The tragic event made a close knit team even closer.

The 3rds had another very successful season with all the old faces turning out for another tramp around the Cambridgeshire countryside to play some very good rugby. The Scorpions only lost twice in the season to Biggleswade and our nemesis Upper Clapton in the Dexuime final. Playing some fantastic rugby, the young talents of Tom Fairweather and Joe Stubbs were nurtured to play beside long serving Saffron stalwarts Wrigley, Murphy, Fitzpatrick, Taylor, Williams, Peirson, Donohue, McCarthy, Crumpler, Lyons, Fairweather senior, Bannister, Flood and Woods. We welcomed into the fold Steve Langford, who for some reason

ended up being known as Lord Steve of Cheshunt, and his good wife Lady Mary of Steeple Bumpstead. Richard Saunders and his brother Roy also joined us and considering Richard came from Upper Clapton he was a very decent chap. Paul Wrigley quite rightly won the "Dave Sharp Memorial" trophy after being voted players, players. The trophy was presented to a very proud Wriggers by Alison Sharp after our last home game of the season. Next season the leagues have been re-jigged and we find ourselves battling against the likes of Harlow, Upper Clapton and the Black Horse. The fixtures will be tougher and we will need the influx of some younger players to help out the old boys as they all head towards 50 (apart from JT and Woodsy who have already passed that bench-mark)!



**Scorpion's Skipper Sean Murphy collects their trophies!**

### **Veterans Rugby.**

On a hot April day, it was heartening to see a Saffron Walden Veterans team finally make the pitch. The small group of has-beens and never were's, played Shelford 5ths in a close fought contest that SW eventually managed to win. Hopefully the team will have a few (just a few) more games next season. If you are interested, Contact Mick Hayes on 07973689333 or email us at [info@swrfc.co.uk](mailto:info@swrfc.co.uk).

**want to play rugby?**

**swrfc always welcomes new players whatever their ability**

**if you're over 17 come and join one of our adult teams - contact us by email at [info@swrfc.co.uk](mailto:info@swrfc.co.uk)**

**if you're 5-16 join our youth section - contact [youthrugby@swrfc.co.uk](mailto:youthrugby@swrfc.co.uk)**

**[www.swrfc.co.uk](http://www.swrfc.co.uk)**

## SWRFC Junior Section

The club has a thriving mini and youth section for boys and girls aged from 5 to 17. Playing numbers now total over 240, with squads in all age groups from Under 6 to Under 16. Quality is improving too, with notable wins over local rivals in many age groups. The Under 12's were worthy winners of the Wenden's festival, and joint winners of the County Cup, and the U13's lost only one game all season.

Next season all youth teams (U13 and above) will play in the Essex League. We will also launch the SWRFC Academy, aimed at helping players aged 16 and above to achieve a successful transition to senior rugby. The Super 12's (the joint venture with Wenden's Ambo) will go into its 6<sup>th</sup> season, and this union has been a major factor in the success of the club's youth programme.

More than 40 volunteers are involved on a regular basis to provide high quality coaching, catering and administrative support - they do an amazing job and deserve a huge vote of thanks.

Simon Read, Director of Youth Rugby

### Under 16's

The U16's originally came together as our very first Super 12's squad. They have worked hard over the years, and shown great team spirit and commitment to the game.

They played 19 games this season, with 11 wins, achieving 3rd place in the Essex league Division 3 after losing out to East London on points difference.

As they move on to Under 17's next season, we will need to build up the squad to give us the strength in depth that will be needed at this level.

Congratulations to Ollie Moktar for county honours, and to end of season award winners Tom Read, Joe Robinson and Reece McCabe, but I want to say well done to all the squad. They have grown into a really committed, keen and capable group of players.

Ralph Staniforth, U16 Team Manager

### Under 15's

A tough season of rebuilding, but the squad has worked exceptionally hard to become a tightly knit unit, playing with great purpose and passion. The forwards are an efficient and effective force with excellent scrummaging, rucking and mauling skills. The backs were hard hit by personnel departures, but their hard work this year is showing through. The team is actively seeking new members to join with the same enthusiasm and passion for the game.

Overall morale and team spirit are high despite the results of the season and the disruption to the games caused by the weather, and I could not ask for a side with more grit and determination or passion for what they do and for each other. End of season awards went to Shaun Bartram, Baris Furlonger and Dan Benton.

Chris Lipscombe, U15 Coach

### Under 14's

The season was a real mixed bag! However, in junior rugby winning isn't everything - it's all about commitment to training and the team, being able to take defeat on the chin and bounce back ready for the next challenge. This season the 25 man squad have all improved their skills, their commitment to training (in all weather!), their friendships and all aspects of team play - so well done to them all!

Looking towards next season as U15's, we will be concentrating on fitness, speed, fitness, power and a bit more speed! I'm sure the coaching staff and I will have the commitment from the lads, as well as the Mums and Dads. Congratulations to Tom Curtis for county honours, and for winning an end of season award along with Joe Clark and Sam James.

Steve Jenkins, U14 Coach

### Under 13's

The U13s, ably lead by captain John Clark, had a great season. The squad of 24 has proved to be a happy, cohesive and determined unit, with a nice balance of competitiveness on the field, and camaraderie off it. Their core rugby skills and understanding have developed well, and this has been reflected in the high quality of their play. The forwards have excelled both in the tight and in open play, while the backs have demonstrated mature handling skills and an adventure for running rugby. We have played a total of 16 games - unbeaten in the Club matches (winning 14 and drawing one) but losing our unbeaten record (20-17) on our tour to West Sussex against a strong Hove RFC team.

Our season's highlight was beating Shelford 12-5 in front of the Club's Vice Presidents, a fighting performance against Colchester RFC, and winning a tournament at Burgess Hill RFC on tour. 5 players were selected for the Eastern Counties School of Rugby, and end of season awards went to John Clark, Mickie Sharp, Josh Flack.

Paul Finch/Dan Clark, U13 Coaches

### Under 12's

The Super 12s have had a super season! Two good squads from SWRFC and WAMRFC came together at the start of the season and very quickly became a force to be reckoned with. A defeat to Bury in a torrential downpour was the only reverse in a season which saw many highlights - victories over Stortford, Hertford and Braintree and great draws against Sudbury and Cambridge. The season was capped with victory at the Wenden's Festival, a share of the county championship following a draw with St Neots in an epic final, plus a 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish at the high calibre Harrogate RFC Festival.

Despite these successes, the most pleasing aspect of the season has been the fact that all the boys who began the season are still turning up regularly and several new players have joined through the year. We regularly field two teams and are well placed for the step up to 15-a-side next year. End of season awards went to Adam Roper, Sam Clark and Tim Dunham.

Ian Cardwell, Under 12 Coach

### **Under 11's**

Great season - lots of fun with the main highlight finishing as Plate finalists in the Bury festival. There were some great individual performances from Jayke Abraham-Milton, Ali Goodhead, Alex Howlett, William Watson and Ned Potter. The whole team deserved an award this season but alas we have to make a choice - Connor Aviet and Charlie Southgate were both recognised for their enthusiastic attitude and their exemplary attendance in all weathers. Both have a fantastic attitude and are fully committed to improving and always eager to learn. We can't wait until next season when we make the leap to the Super12's.

James Potter and Peter O'Brien, U11 Coaches

### **Under 10's**

The squad has made real progress both in terms of tactical play and team bonding. Turnout has been fantastic, even when the ground has been completely waterlogged or frozen.

Whilst the team may not have come home with any major trophies, we have achieved wins against some much larger clubs. The squad is really well supported by coaches and parents, and demonstrates the whole ethos of Saffron Walden Rugby Club. We have a group of really good players in the squad, each with their own merits, however this year awards went to Stanley Hinton for his dedication (he 'forgot' to tell his mother that doctors had advised against contact rugby while he was recovering from a back injury!), and Dan Cohen (who is the archetypal forward always on the ball, creating havoc and a star player!).

Many thanks to everyone who helped us out and we really look forward to seeing you all next season.

Rolf Wittman, Under 10's Coach

### **Under 9's**

The squad has developed into a competitive team in their first season of contact rugby. The players have worked extremely hard throughout, and shown a willingness to play open, expansive rugby while not shirking the more combative areas of the ruck and maul. We have won most matches during the season, which culminated in a very credible third place at the Wendens Festival, where the draw did us no favours!

Highlights of the season include the fearsome tackling of JP Levick, the bullocking runs of Harry Ball, the commitment of Tristan Harris and the try poaching expertise of Archie Norman. On their day the U9s are a good side, capable of giving the bigger clubs a run for their money! End of season awards went to Harry Ball and JP Levick.

John Levick, Under 9's Coach

### **Under 8's**

The U8 squad has made considerable strides this season, with a marked improvement in skills and positional awareness. Despite a relatively small squad we achieved some good wins, notably against Huntingdon, Upper Clapton and Witham. Having narrowly missed out on the Plate Final at the Bury Festival, it was a case of "so near yet so far" in the other festivals. Despite being unbeaten at the Wendens Festival we failed to qualify for the final by the narrowest of margins and suffered a similar fate at the Cambridge Cup a few weeks later. Despite these disappointments the players enjoyed the

season and are already looking forward to making the transition to contact rugby next year. End of season awards went to Mans Thornburg and Ben Turnbull.

Neil Aitken, Under 8's Coach



**Ball in both hands!**

### **Under 7's**

A fantastic season, with some very promising new talent and great attitudes. Many more wins than losses, concluding with the Cambridge Cup Final when we lost narrowly to Newmarket. We fielded at least one team every week, sometimes two, but we can always do with more players - if each member brought a non-member friend to a training session, I am sure that most of them would enjoy themselves and want to continue.

Whilst every player developed and became more confident during the season, the end of season awards went to Maisie Southgate, Adam Ward and Fergus Wootton, (who has developed a "dummy" that needs to be seen to be believed!).

One of the highlights of the season was when after we won away at Huntingdon - their coach said after the match the SWRFC U7 were the most polite, friendly team they had played, but also one of the most talented!

Thanks to all the players and parents who turned up in some pretty miserable weather!!! Looking forward to an even more successful season 2010-2011

John Wootton, Under 7's Coach

### **Under 6's**

Cooky and Bomber, with much trepidation, agreed to take the Under 6's under their wings back in September. The first real challenge was an away game at Shelford. They put in a good performance but it is fair to say there were a few areas that needed work on. Fast forward to March, and with a bulging squad, the basics grasped (well almost) the coaches can only dream they ever possessed some of the skills now displayed by the youngsters! With good support pitch-side from Mum and Dad, this was a fun packed season with great potential for the future. End of season awards went to Morgan Cook and George Weston.

Paul Cook and Bomber Pierson, Under 6 Coaches