



# Anstey Spectator

The Newsletter of Alton RFC



19 24 Winter 2016

www.alton-rfc.com

**Welcome** everyone to the last edition of the Anstey Spectator for 2016, the members' newsletter of Alton Rugby Football Club. This is your newsletter, so if there is anything you would like to see featured in future editions, please get in touch. Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year from all at Alton RFC. Contact Katie McFarlane [katiealtonrugby@gmail.com](mailto:katiealtonrugby@gmail.com)

## President's Platitudes

"Where does the time go?!" We are already halfway (yes halfway!) through the 2016/2017 season! That said, we've achieved a lot here at ARFC in the past 6 months - including the following highlights (and apologies for having to leave out some of our many triumphs!):

Our Senior 1st XV are currently lying 4th in Snows Hampshire 2, having achieved 6 wins from 8, and are now 12 points clear of the team in 5th place. The Senior 2nd XV is also holding 4th place in Solent 4, while our Masters have been playing regularly. Added to this, our 2 Colts' sides are performing well in both the Hampshire Cup & Plate Colts Leagues and we have a vibrant, successful Junior Section led by a new Chairman. My personal congratulations go to Bruce Ray on his appointment to this latter position - and my thanks go to the others who offered themselves for it.

So far this season, fingers crossed, no ARFC teams have had to play home games away from Anstey Park which has, no doubt, supported their success. To help keep us on home ground, the Verti-drainer has now visited us twice and Alton Town Council's (ATC's) ground staff are pleased with the results. Bob Curtis, and the rest of the ARFC working party, are in regular contact with ATC and we should be in a position to update you very soon on the Council's future, positive plans for rugby in Anstey Park.

Other great news is that we have a new, successful, Sunday kitchen regime and, again, my personal thanks go out - to Esther Kereti for stepping so well into the breach. The work to provide the new Clubhouse kitchen is also progressing with the old bar cooler replaced, and repositioned, to make way for its construction and EHDC Environmental Health Dept. consulted to ensure we "get it right." Tenders for the kitchen work have now been received and analysed, and we expect to appoint a contractor shortly to start in February/March next year. (If you know someone who might want to price the work, it's not too late but do contact me urgently.) Alongside the kitchen work, we'll be replacing the existing Clubhouse window frames (which have served us well for over 40 years), remodelling the existing office as a store room and creating a new office in the vacated kitchen. If you can assist with either this work or associated fund raising, please do contact me.

A final big success in the season so far is, I believe, the Alton RFC Weekly Update which is distributed to all ARFC members by email. The strength of the Update is that it reflects Alton RFC as 'One Club' whichever activity you, as an individual, are involved in. The Update has already gone global - reaching members in Scotland and Florida (and even in the depths of Derbyshire & East Anglia!) and I'm sure that's not the end of it - I'm just waiting for the Antipodeans to put their heads above the parapet! (If you're not getting a copy, do go to the ARFC Website Members' Area and check that your email address, and your membership, is up to date.) The Update's success is mainly due to the tireless efforts of Judy Youell and the many people who, each week, provide her with material for it - sincere thanks to all of you. Remember, if you have items for inclusion - be they playing reports, future functions, fund raising, Club history etc - please do contact Judy: [judy.youell@gmail.com](mailto:judy.youell@gmail.com).

So, a lot is happening at Alton ARFC and that's a great sign that we care about the Club and want to improve and enjoy what we have. As I stated in the last ARFC Newsletter: "it is what we personally put in to our sport that has the most reward." On that note, may I wish you all a Very Happy Christmas - and a New Year that brings you the satisfaction that you want from life and your Rugby Club.

Tom Mills  
Honorary ARFC President  
[t.p.mills@talk21.com](mailto:t.p.mills@talk21.com)  
07887 596816



## News from the Club Shop

The movement to selling the Alton RFC playing kit online is becoming a real success with record numbers of players now purchasing kit. Looking out onto the playing fields today, you'll see a harmonised standard with the majority of players in the new O'Neill's playing strip and, as the bad weather approaches, O'Neill's will be ready to supply the full range of weatherproof kit - from training tops, rain jackets to waterproof tracksuit bottoms. If you haven't seen it yet, do visit the O'Neill's website (see below). As well as playing kit, you'll find that the website has a great range of social-wear clothing for both men and women and, as Christmas comes around, what about purchasing the Alton RFC toddler-sized playing shirt to make siblings feel part of the Club? (See: <https://www.oneills.com/alton-rfc-rugby-jersey-toddler.html>). Whether or not you plan to purchase anything, do register with O'Neill's website <https://www.oneills.com/customer/account/create/> to get updates on special offers and showcasing of new lines.

Some excellent news is that a number of our ARFC teams now have sponsors for playing kit, and indeed after match kit, which looks great. We encourage you all to look for support for your age group from outside sponsors as this is a brilliant way to get organisations involved in the Club. Remember that we have various corporate sponsorship packages available that can include marketing opportunities at Club events - and even attendance of international games! If you have a sponsor who is interested at a Club or age group level, please contact me (or Bruce Ray) and we'll endeavour to help.

As a Club, we expect ALL playing kit to be purchased through O'Neill's (and any special / sponsored orders must come through me). However, following the move to O'Neills, we have a small amount of kit left available at the Club Shop and will be holding a Christmas Sale on the morning of Sunday 18 December. We'll be selling off at bargain prices on a one-off basis - when it's gone, it's gone!!

Finally, I'm sure that you'll be pleased to hear that, with our new Junior Club Chairman now in place (and congratulations + thanks to Bruce for stepping up to this position), we are undertaking a full audit of the condition of kit & equipment at the Club. Where necessary, we'll be looking to provide updated or additional items across the age groups. Meanwhile, as always, please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss kit requirements or any issues you may have in regards to kit across the age groups.

Julian Welch  
Alton RFC Kit Manager  
07760 174039  
[shop@alton-rfc.com](mailto:shop@alton-rfc.com)



## Alton Junior Rugby Club: Hants RFU Safeguarding Audit

No one can have missed recent disturbing and distressing press reports around child safeguarding failures in football. These reaffirmed ARFC's resolve to make the safeguarding of our young players the highest priority for all members - officials, coaches, managers or parents. As the RFU says "Children are the lifeblood of the game and it is crucial that they are cared for in the correct manner". At ARFC, we remain confident in our junior club operation reassuring all that our controls are exemplary. Given this, ARFC last month welcomed a (fortuitously) routine visit by the Hampshire RFU Child Safeguarding Team, led by its Manager & a Rugby Development Officer (RDO), to audit our safeguarding processes & practices, and to see how our coaching is working in practice with junior squads from U6 through to U16.

The safeguarding audit is a thorough procedure which began with the Hampshire RFU Team holding discussions with Club officials (including myself as Junior Chairman & our Club Safeguarding Officer, Andy Gay) to understand the processes and procedures that we have in place. This included reviewing key documentation - including our safeguarding policy & our Children's Workforce List. This list is the database of all adults in contact with children at ARFC, along with their DBS status (Disclosure & Barring Service - previously CRB), and is vital in ensuring that a DBS qualified adult is always present with junior squads. The Team then spent a long period out with each squad at the Club observing processes in action at training sessions, and matches, across all age-groups. A key part of this was an in-depth discussion with each squad manager and my thanks goes to all for accommodating us on the day.

We have now received the Hampshire RFU Team's report and, pleasingly, overall it is positive and helpful - with several recommendations around documentation and communication rather than what we do in practice. The report doesn't come with scores, but its overall description of ARFC is as "a large, friendly, welcoming club" where "supervision ratios are good for the number of children present" - reflecting the fact that ARFC has 100 volunteer coaches, squad managers and parent helpers for around 400 children. The majority of these are already cleared and the remainder are in the process of attaining that clearance. The report recognised that process and encouraged completion on any adult still waiting. Also noted was the importance of the RFU 'play it safe' course, run at the Club in July and attended by squad officials from most age groups, meaning all squads can now expect to have a trained official present. Though not the main focus, informal feedback from the RDO on our coaching was also positive with some development suggestions which the Club can take forward.

Safeguarding isn't, however, anything to be complacent about and we must use the report to highlight how we can constantly improve. Once the report is finalised, it will be taken to both ARFC's junior & senior committees ensuring proposed actions are agreed and are subsequently implemented. ARFC is committed to implementing all suggested possible best practices in this area including those in the audit and beyond. For example, 100% of volunteers should be DBS cleared before taking a role, the 'game raised' on first aid provision, (with appropriate awareness of player medical conditions), more qualified coaches, better risk management of social media, and better communication. This may be achieved by undergoing DBS checks quickly; first aid or "play it safe" training; better 1st aid kit and equipment provision; better provision of data to squad managers; or, simply, by not taking offence if - as a non-DBS cleared member - your direct involvement with our youngsters isn't encouraged (other than vociferously supporting from the side-lines!)

Pleasingly and importantly, the overall audit was a highly worthwhile process providing an opportunity to learn and build on what we do well - so a big thank you to the squad managers, coaches and parents who were so accommodating on the day and to the Hampshire RFU Team. If you do have any questions, please do speak to Andy Gay or myself.

Bruce Ray  
Alton RFC Junior Chair

## A Quick Update on Our Under 16s!

The Under 16s have had a really good start to the 2016/17 season. An already strong squad has been further bolstered by the addition of 2 new Alton schoolboys. Ollie Startup and Francis Searle - and, until Sunday December 11th's closely fought 14-13 defeat against Trojan Warriors, it had been unbeaten. There is no doubt, that providing the U16 squad can remain fit, the rest of the 2016/17 season will prove to be highly successful. Well done all of you!!



## ARFC Junior Rugby: Hello from the New Junior Chair!

Hello all, Bruce Ray here. For those who don't already know me, I'm the newly appointed ARFC Junior Chairman and there's a photograph below. (I'm the bloke in the background - I can only dream of playing rugby to the level of the former England and Lions prop in the foreground!) In my new capacity, I'll be trying to fill the (not so insignificant) shoes of Mr Dave Gwyther! Thanks Dave - for everything that you have done and continue to do for the Club.



What can I tell you about me? I live in Alton, have been an ARFC member for nearly 9 years and have 2 sons who play for the Club. At some point, I've coached squads all the way through from Under 6 to Under 16 and my primary coaching responsibility is now with the Under 16s - a great squad, with a great group of lads, many of whom have been with the Club since the Under 6s! Fantastic continuity within the Club. What else? Well, I was a London Irish season ticket holder for 10 years (ashamed to say I let my ticket go this year) and have a very close association with the Northampton Saints. I am also a regular at Twickenham and, if I can't get tickets, you'll normally find me watching the game in the Clubhouse with my son & our dog!

Enough of me for now - what about ARFC Junior Section? With around 400 junior members, ARFC has a very strong section at this level - with many successes and several Junior squads regularly winning tournaments and matches. My priority, just as importantly, will be to ensure that all continue to enjoy the game and we grow our numbers. Enjoyment is one of the five rugby values and, if children aren't enjoying themselves, there are so many other activities they could choose to take part in. Let's keep them engaged in and enjoying ARFC!

Finally, thank you for all the feedback that I've received so far and, please, do keep it coming. (If need be, grab me either by the pitch or in the Clubhouse afterwards.) Let me know, particularly, your ideas for improvements - we are already working on a number of areas, including communication, the website, kit & equipment availability and our processes. Have you got further ideas? Can you help? Just let me know!  
So bye for now and I wish you all, and your families, a Happy Christmas and a healthy, successful 2017.

Bruce Ray  
Alton RFC Junior Chair

## ARFC Pre-loved Kit Shop

Over the years, the Club has collected unwanted and unloved kit from members, but there has never been any formal outlet to offer this kit to you. With that in mind, Trudy Carter (Under 13 TM) and Katie McFarlane (Under 9 TM) will be operating a Pre-loved Kit Shop. For a minimal cost, you will be able to kit your little cherubs out with training kit and boots. All profits will go to the Wooden Spoon Rugby Charity. The shop will be open in the Clubhouse from 10:30am - 12:30pm on every 2nd Sunday of the month. If you do have any unwanted kit that you would like to donate, there will be a box at the back of the Clubhouse to drop it in - or contact Trudy or Katie on: [steveandtrudy@gmail.com](mailto:steveandtrudy@gmail.com) or [katiealtonrugby@gmail.com](mailto:katiealtonrugby@gmail.com)



## THINK ARFC CLUBHOUSE 24/7!!

The ARFC Clubhouse is an amazing facility that everyone should get the best from. Currently, it's briefly a hive of activity and then languishes – in all its glory - just awaiting you! We need you to think Clubhouse 24/7!

- **Saturdays:** If you're not playing, come and watch the home matches. Why not book a great value pre-match lunch (guests welcome!) or have a pre / post-match drink at the bar? If there's no home match, watch top rugby (via Sky/BT) over a drink at the Clubhouse.
- **Sundays:** Pop in for a cuppa / bacon roll (or a pre-lunch drink at the excellent value bar) with family, friends or dog – while supporting the Junior/Colts games.
- **Tuesday/Thursday:** Your local bar is open to enjoy every Tuesday/Thursday evening (in season). After doing (or watching) some serious training, have a break at the bar and catch up with friends at ARFC.
- **Week nights:** The Clubhouse's programme includes numerous fundraisers and special events. See external noticeboards for details - then bring friends to the fun.
- **With friends and family:** The Clubhouse always welcomes your guests – including non-members, children and (well behaved!) dogs.
- **When organising parties or family events:** The Clubhouse is available for parties/receptions (up to 100 people) at discounted member rates with our usual (sensible) bar prices. Organising an 18th/60th/100th birthday party? Wedding reception? Sunday Christening tea? Talk to us about what the Clubhouse can organise at a great price.
- **When talking to friends and family:** The Clubhouse is available for hire to non-members. Do your family/friends a favour and explain ARFC's great facilities for parties/events. They'll get refurbished (constantly improving) premises - with a bar, AV facilities, outside deck and ample parking plus kitchen to support self-catering or fully-catered events.
- **Dealing with the unexpected:** Sadly, the Clubhouse often hosts receptions following bereavement. We are here to respond swiftly and ensure that the day goes as well as possible. Please contact us any time on this.
- **At work:** If you, or colleagues, are organising a business event (meetings, Awaydays, customer receptions etc) – think ARFC! With up-to-date AV and business facilities, the Clubhouse is a perfect venue. (Think great bar prices to end a hard day's meeting!). Speak to us about what we can offer. And if you haven't organised your Xmas party yet, remember that the Clubhouse may still have availability & is a great place to hold any celebration!
- **... Rest and play:** Belong to a Club/Society/Charity without facilities? Suggest the Clubhouse for meetings (including AGMs) with discount rates for regular use.

Further information: [www.altonrfc.com](http://www.altonrfc.com)

## Get Your Tickets 'Ere!!

Like all RFU member clubs, each season, ARFC receives an allocation of international tickets for key matches at Twickenham from the RFU - with the most recent allocation being for the forthcoming Six Nations. (The number of tickets allocated is determined by a mysterious formula understood only by the RFU but which does, at least, take into account membership size!) RFU rules permit us to use some of the allocation to support sponsorship deals to benefit the Club as a whole, but ARFC still makes at least 50% of tickets available for purchase by members & tries always to ensure that all members have an equal opportunity to do this.

For example, for Six Nations tickets, we announced in the ARFC Weekly Update (circulated to all members) on 17 November 2016 that the Club had available a number of tickets to purchase for particular matches (with prices stated) and members were encouraged to apply asap! The expectation was that demand would outstrip supply and that it would be necessary to hold a ballot to allocate the tickets fairly. However, after a reminder on 23 November, we closed for applications on 30 November and were, fortunately, able to satisfy most requests without a ballot.

This is the procedure we expect to continue in future so, if you are interested in purchasing tickets, do keep a 'close eye' on the ARFC Weekly Update and other Club communications. We can't predict precisely when we will be able to inform you of our allocation for any given set of matches, but we expect to announce ARFC's allocation for the 2017 Autumn Internationals in September. Do check carefully any Club communications/emails (including your ARFC Weekly Update) from the very start of the season if you want tickets for these.

Now, a few points to bear in mind if you are applying for tickets. The RFU suggests that each member should be allowed to purchase only 1-2 tickets from the allocation. However, ARFC sees rugby as a family/social game and wants to give members the opportunity to enjoy games with family/friends. Hence, we do not - at present - restrict the number of tickets that you can apply for in an arbitrary way. However, in the interest of fairness, ARFC

## Andy Styles Atlantic Row 2016

Fancy walking to the North Pole? No? Ok then, fancy walking to the South Pole? Again, No? How about rowing across the Atlantic, then? All of it sounds impossible, right? Well, you'd be wrong!! Long time Alton RFC player, supporter & sponsor Andy Styles has already completed the first two challenges and, on December 15 (just before the Newsletter goes to press), sets out to conquer the third - by competing in this year's "TALISKER WHISKY ATLANTIC CHALLENGE"!!!

Andy's A-Adventures team is aiming to row 3000 nautical miles across the sea from Spain to the Caribbean. This is one of the toughest challenges on earth, made more difficult by raging seas, howling winds, sharks, blisters, salt rashes, sunstroke & sleep deprivation. Rowing for 2 hours before getting just 2 hours kip before rowing again..... It doesn't get any harder!! Andy is supporting three amazing charities in his endeavour: Bowel Cancer UK, Joliba Trust & Barnardo's. Alton RFC is extremely proud of what he's doing so, please, help make his efforts worthwhile! You can donate via charity tins placed prominently in the Clubhouse bar or via <http://www.a-adventures.co.uk/home>. Give as much as you can! Do also check in at the Club to see how Andy's doing – we'll be regularly monitoring his progress & whereabouts.



continued.....

would not necessarily be able to fulfil all of a larger request, particularly if demand for tickets becomes higher and we more frequently have to resort to ballots. (Good to say, the indications are that demand seems set to rise!).

Do also consider that our allocation generally contains tickets at all price levels, but cheaper tickets are more popular - so it's useful to specify when applying how high a price you'd be prepared to pay. And keep in mind also the fact that, if you are successful, tickets have to be paid for swiftly (as the RFU demands payment of ARFC very swiftly!). Finally, please remember that any tickets that you are lucky enough to be allocated are for personal use only - by you, your friends or family; they are for you to enjoy and must never be re-sold on the open market.

If you have any queries on any of this, please let me know.

Dave Gwyther  
[davidgwyther@btinternet.com](mailto:davidgwyther@btinternet.com)



## Action Packed Agenda for the Mini / Midis!

The Mini/Midis have had a great first half of the season with a whole raft of highly competitive Festivals and Tournaments – including the Trojans Tournament and New Milton, Havant and, of course, Alton Festivals. Our young players consistently did ARFC proud by playing exceptionally well across the board - with a number of truly stand-out performances!

For example, at the Trojans Tournament our U9s won their group comprehensively with an aggregate score of 30-1, while at New Milton our U8's 2 squads made, respectively, the 3rd place play-off (coming 6th) and the 2nd place play-off (coming 4th). Our U10s likewise had a very successful day at Havant Festival where both their teams performed extremely well conceding very few tries and yet again came out on top. Our U11s managed to top the pool at all three Festivals – with wins in the 1st place play-offs at Alton & New Milton - and a very tight loss in the Trojans 1st place play-off. The U11s also put on a great performance at the London Irish U11 & U12 Cup at Henley where the first 3 games ended with comprehensive wins for the ARFC side before the final game ended in a draw.

Our young players have also benefitted from some action-packed training and skills sessions including those with Haslemere and Farnham RFCs where activities included an assault course! Perhaps the most adventurous of all was the session with Vectis RFC when ARFC's U7-U11s set off unspeakably early for the trip to the Isle of Wight – and virtually took over the Portsmouth to Fishbourne ferry! Everyone had a brilliant training session (and some really competitive games) and the ARFC visit was greatly appreciated by the Vectis squad. Back on home ground, our U12s also acted as great ambassadors for the game of rugby by welcoming pupils from Eggar's School Year 7 (and their parents) for a Hants RFU session at Anstey Park. A great time was had by all and we very much hope to welcome some of these visitors back again soon!

As always, our young players have shown, during the first half-season, that they can play not only well, but with great team spirit – and that they are willing to put 100% into the game. ARFC is extremely proud of their commitment and courage and very grateful to their dedicated coaches, managers and parents for making their achievements possible. Hats off to our ARFC youngsters and may they continue to do us proud (after having a wonderful Xmas!!)

## Former ARFC player represents the Royal Navy.

Former ARFC Junior, Colts and First Team player, Adam Gallagher, is to represent the Royal Navy U23s in the Inter Service Cup 2016. Adam began playing rugby with Alton having been inspired by the success of the England Rugby team at the 2003 World Cup. He represented the Club at all age groups up to & including 1st XV before moving to Eastleigh during the 2014 season.

Adam joined the Royal Navy in 2015 and, based in Portsmouth, played representative 7s with the Royal Navy Sharks at the end of the 2015/16 season. He was then selected to join the U23 training camp in the run up to the 2016 Inter Service Cup. This highly competitive competition culminates in games between the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force (see below) – with the Royal Navy being the current holders. In the run up to the Inter Service Cup, Adam has played for the Royal Navy at 11, 13 and 15 in games against Hampshire U20s, Havant U23s, Cambridge University U23s, the Exeter Chiefs Academy, Dorset and Wiltshire U20s & Ealing Trailfinders Academy.

Wednesday 16 November 2016 (19.00) sees the kick off of the Inter Service Cup between the Royal Navy and the Army - at the Army Rugby Union in Aldershot. Two weeks later, they're up against the RAF at Burnaby Road in Portsmouth to determine the winner of the 2016 Inter Service Cup. Check out the match reports on:

<http://www.navyrugbyunion.co.uk/fixtures/tables/u23-xv>

Adam said "I played my formative rugby at Alton and learned all of the core skills that would serve me well through my rugby career so far there. I have extremely fond memories of the friendships I forged and am grateful to all the Coaches and team mates who have helped me to develop my game."

We wish Adam all the very best with this competition and with his Navy career. It's fantastic to hear of yet another young player doing so well following his time with ARFC.

## ARFC Newsletters - 1970s to the Present Day

We all know how incredibly hard Katie McFarlane works to put together / circulate the fabulous ARFC Newsletters (as well as being a team manager, staging the pre-loved kit shop etc etc). We thank her for all this & for her endless patience – not least with recalcitrant authors, layout glitches & unreasonable print deadlines. However, think for a moment how even more awesome the burden would be without the benefit of modern technology – what if there was no email, no internet, no publication software & no electronic photo libraries??

The above question arises because we recently heard from an ARFC member, Graham Garrett, who was compiling ARFC Newsletters back in the 1970s when the world was quite a different place! It was an era when we were negotiating to get into the E-E-C, when fuel crises led to daily electricity cuts, when Nixon resigned post-Watergate, when Lord Lucan vanished, when the Sex Pistols ran riot on TV (and "Dixon of Dock Green" ended) and when Borg won Wimbledon. It was also an era without general access to computers or word processors, without mobile phones, texts or internet and when photographs were taken via film that had to be sent off for development.

Poor Graham would, no doubt, have run up a huge bill phoning round to commission (and chivy up) contributions before waiting for these to be posted to him. He'd then have had to meticulously type up the Newsletter – allowing time for tippex to dry on any corrections – before producing copies on a duplicating machines (which some say produced enough fumes to constitute an illegal high). Newsletters could then, finally, be posted to members in hand-addressed / stamped envelopes. Not everything about the old days was good (and they had just as many problems then raising teams and finding bar volunteers!!)

Some (good) things, of course, haven't changed in the last 40 years or so. Yes the subs have gone up a bit from £3 per annum, but numerous ARFC teams are still playing some great rugby at all levels, we are still keeping up with improvements to the Clubhouse and there's still a lively social scene (even if we no longer have Halloween hops, fancy dress discos or ghost nights). Some of the 'names' from those days are still around keeping ARFC ticking and on track. It's good to know that some (good) things don't change!!

Huge thanks from us all go to Graham for preserving the 1970's Newsletters which we've recently had on display at the Clubhouse. If anyone else wants to see these fascinating bits of ARFC history, please ask Judy Youell to email them through: [judy.youell@gmail.com](mailto:judy.youell@gmail.com)

