

The Wanderer

WRFC NEWS January 2020

Dear Members and Friends

A happy New Year to you all. I hope you had a great Christmas and New Year break and are enjoying your excess-free January – only a few days now!

We have another bumper Newsletter for you this month with lots of important information about forthcoming events including the Six Nations, pre match lunches, the volunteer's lunch and the President's dinner.

We had a fantastic pre-match lunch for the Hereford game on the 18th January with all three teams at home. Around 100 of our 150 guests enjoyed pie and mash, sponge and custard and fine wine - all for £15! Our Hereford guests were particularly complimentary and a big thank you must go to Brian Ryan, new Clubhouse Manager, and his team for a fantastic lunch. And in response to popular demand we have another three pre-match lunches planned for March and April – see details below.

As always, I am happy to hear from you so if you have any ideas about how we can improve the way we run the club and what we offer please let me know. You can always send your ideas to our new **suggestion box** – see item below.

150 Years of WRFC

A small group of former members and associates of WRFC are producing a book for publication later this year to celebrate 150 years of WRFC. The book will be one of a number of activities and events to mark our sesquicentennial celebrations in 2021. The group is jointly led by Derek

Thompson and David Hallmark and includes Dick Cumming, Pete Richardson, Dave Arr, Dave Richardson and Tony Lee. Brian Lewis had also been involved but recently sadly passed away.

The group has set up a dedicated 150 year anniversary website www.wrfc2021.co.uk which



gives a history of the club and invites stories and photographs from families and those involved with the club over the years. The group are particularly keen to hear from past and present members/players of their time with the club. Items and photos from the Colts for seasons, 1981/82, 1985/86, 1986/87, and from 1994 to 1999 and 2013 to 2019 are of particular interest. If you have any information, please e-mail info@wrfc2021.co.uk and/or visit web site wrfc2021.co.uk.

WRFC – The Early Years

The club was founded in 1871 by the Reverend Francis John Eld, with the first known game played against the First Worcestershire Artillery Corps on 8 November 1871. This game was played on the Somerset Place ground - now known to us all as Flagge Meadow. Initially matches were played on a variety of grounds in the city including Pitchcroft, New Road, Perdiswell, Bevere and at the junction of Bilford Road and Droitwich Road with various public houses - The



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Saracens Head, Northwick Arms, Ye Olde Talbot providing changing accommodation and refreshments.

In the first season 1871-72, 9 games were played with the first recorded victory was over Gloucester College. The first AGM was 1875. The year also saw Kings School Bromsgrove, Kidderminster, and R.G.S. added to the fixture list. Moseley was added in 1877 and the second team established in 1883.

International tickets

You may have heard that our allocation of international tickets has reduced. Bryan Radford explains the background to our allocation and what we can expect in the future.

Our RFU international ticket allocation has in recent years been based on our part of being the same club as Worcester Warriors and having a separate amateur club Worcester Wanderers. This year, as in previous years, Wanderers received 20 per each England home match. From next year we expect this to increase to 40. In addition, we have also received under the "same club" principle 60 tickets from the Warriors which have enabled us to offer more tickets to our members and players to the point that, if applied in time, most members got an allocation of 2 tickets for at least one of the games.

The new owners have decided to end this arrangement. Whilst we are disappointed with this decision it is something we will, as part of our on-going discussions with the Warriors, look to have restored. I am sorry that international tickets may be a little restricted for the foreseeable future. In the meantime, information on international tickets and details about the member ballot for tickets can be obtained from me at:

bryan.radford@worcesterrugbyclub.co.uk

though the next batch of tickets will be for the Autumn series and we let you know in a future newsletter when you can apply.

Six Nations at the Club

Sunday 2 nd February	France vs England	3.00pm
Saturday 8 th February	Ireland vs Wales	2.15pm
	Scotland vs England	4.45pm
Sunday 23 rd February	England vs Ireland	3.00pm
Saturday 7 th March	Ireland vs Italy	2.15pm
	England vs Wales	4.45pm
Saturday 14 th March	Wales vs Scotland	2.15pm
	Italy vs England	4.45pm

See Club posters for Bar opening times

Financial Performance

Running a £350,000 a year rugby business has its challenges. We are making inroads into last year's financial deficit. Figures to the end of November suggest we should be on course to reduce it by half – to around £25,000 this year. December and January look to have been good months for the club so hopefully we can continue to chip away at this figure. The improvement has been achieved largely through additional bar income – both rugby and commercial and additional income from advertising, car parking and reductions in



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spending. Our financial priorities remain improving our internal accounting practices, getting our financial reporting right and, importantly, apportioning costs and income to the right places so we have a better understanding of how our three cost centres - Rugby, Bars and the Club - are performing.

There is still much work to do but I am confident that from next season we will be able to report more accurately and regularly on our financial performance. I am also hopeful we will see the deficit eliminated completely next season.

We will, later this year, be looking at capital investment for next season. We have a number of competing priorities and examples include additional pitch and car park lighting and refurbishment of the club shop. The Management Committee will be looking carefully at each case for investment and affordability before making a final decision at the end of the season.

Dates for your diary

Six Nations – see earlier item for details

Saturday 21st March pre-match lunch for both WRFC 1st XV v Lichfield and Warriors v Gloucester.
- From 12.45 £17.50-£21.50 ph

Saturday 4th April pre-match lunch for WRFC 1st XV vs Ludlow 1.00pm £15.00 ph

Saturday 18th April Volunteers and Sponsors pre-match Lunch. WRFC 1st XV vs Droitwich (last game of the season). From 1.00pm £15.00 ph

April Presidents night. Details to follow

Wednesday 24th June Club AGM

We have given Business Development the go-ahead to introduce a linked but separate commercial website promoting the clubhouse as a place for events – wedding, birthdays, meetings etc. The feedback from the few external events we have held so far has been extremely positive, but we need to do more to promote the facility as much more than just a rugby clubhouse. The new website should be up and running by the Spring.

Every member can help. We have a dedicated salesforce of nearly 700 people! Every new member and sponsor introduced, every pound spent in the shop or bar and every extra commercial event booked will help us strengthen our club. We have some fantastic events planned over the next few months so bring your friends and clients to see what we have to offer.

Finally, we all recognise the club is not just about income and expenditure. We are a members' club first and I am acutely aware that we must not lose sight of our underlying duty - to maintain the ethos that has kept us going as a rugby club for the last 149 years! You have my promise.

On the Pitch

Niall Crawford, DoR and I took the opportunity in December to meet with the senior team coaches



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and senior players to discuss the season so far and how the club can support coaching staff and senior teams so they can realise their potential. We had a constructive discussion looking at what we do well and the areas we need to strengthen. We have agreed a range of actions and we will have follow up discussions with coaches and players over the coming months. For the longer-term Niall, Tim Cunliffe - M/J chair, and I are keen to ensure we support team managers and volunteer coaches at all levels and will be looking at what more the club can do to develop coaching especially those volunteering for the first time.

1st Team Fixtures in February

Saturday 1st February Stoke on Trent – Away 2.15

Saturday 8th February Kenilworth – Home 2.15

Friday 14th February Stourbridge – Away 7.15

Saturday 22nd February Newbold – Away 2.15

Friday 28th February Kidderminster – Home 7.15

We will have detailed up-date on all our teams in the February newsletter.

Presidents Dinner – April 2020

The Presidents dinner and awards evening will be held in April 2020 at the club so look out for details. Numbers will be limited so early booking is recommended.

Suggestion box

We have introduced an email suggestion box for your ideas. If you have thoughts and ideas about how we can improve our club then please do not hesitate to email them at

suggestionbox@worcesterrugbyclub.co.uk

Alternatively and as always, don't hesitate to talk to me or one of the Committee if something is on your mind.

Subscriptions - Have your say

And don't forget to let us know your views on subscriptions and charges for next season. It is still not too late – President Jim has extended the deadline for feedback to 14 February.

Christmas Raffle

I am delighted to announce that Alan Gilson, one of our M/J parents, won the car in our Christmas raffle. We sold over 500 tickets and raised nearly £2400 for the club. A particular thanks needs to go to Wendy Sharpe for her unstinting efforts to make the raffle a success. Thank you. The funds raised will be used to invest in the club.

Grounds and Property

The rain has been the dominant feature during the last few months. Sadly, we had to postpone the North Mids county match due to a waterlogged pitch. If we don't have a lengthy dry period we will have to think carefully about how we make use of all pitches and land for training and matches.

We have agreed to more pothole repairs and work on the boggy area by pitch one and the club house used to access pitches 3 and 4. This work will start as soon as conditions permit.

You will also be aware we have had problems with the pumps draining rainwater from the underground pedestrian tunnel linking our ground with Sixways. Temporary pumps have been



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installed with new permanent pumps being installed soon.

I must praise the work of Martin Swinnerton and our colleagues at the Warriors for their quick action and efforts to resolve the problem. Martin has been steadily building our relationships with our friends at Sixways and it was great to have had the opportunity to thank Jeff Green, the Warriors groundsman, personally at the Hereford game for his work and support.

Meet the Management Committee

Jim Goodman – President

This is my second year as President of WRFC. I have been a member of the club since 1984 and joined when I was a medical student at Birmingham University although I have been involved with the club since I was a small child as my father was a member and player – he played during the same era as Derek Thompson who is still a member. In fact WRFC is very much in my blood as two of my uncles – Don Everton and Jem Richardson - were also WRFC prominent players in their day and have played influential roles in the club over the years. I have played regularly for the club until I had to retire through illness in 2016. A lot has happened to the club during my time, particularly with the involvement of Cecil Duckworth, the first XV climbing the leagues until eventually reaching the Premiership, the creation of Worcester Wanderers RFC to enable amateur players to play competitive rugby, the separation of the Wanderers from the Warriors and development of the new clubhouse and grounds and finally the restoration of our status as WRFC. What could be better?

I see my role as President as being a figurehead of the club and our representative with regard to other clubs, the RFU and the wider community as well as also trying to uphold the values of the club which has been an important part of my life for so many years. I also feel that it is my responsibility to try to ensure that all sections of the club feel valued and pull together as a single united club. In fact I hope that I try to ensure that all members are able to have their say and contribute to the club in whatever way they feel able. With regard to this latter point, please feel free to contact me if you have any issues or concerns about the club. I am very proud of this club and what it has achieved. In my view we have the best rugby club that I know of. We have a fabulous ground and clubhouse with rugby for all ages and abilities, a first XV which competes at just about the highest possible level for a purely amateur club and a close relationship with the Warriors next door which is itself a club that we created.

Finally, a number of members have asked me if we are planning to change the club's name from WRFC to Worcester Wanderers RFC. We are not. Indeed, we made a firm commitment in November to retain 'WRFC' as it is an important part of our heritage and history. We did, however, agree to use the name Wanderers to describe our ground. It helps give the ground some identity and also retains the more familiar term for our 1st team. So if you have been wondering, the answer is... no!

Bar and Catering

I am delighted to welcome Brian Ryan as the new Clubhouse Manager. Brian took over from Andy at the beginning of the month and, as well as responsibility for the bar, Brian will also work



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closely with Stuart James and Sam Carter to expand our commercial activities. Brian has over 25 years' experience in managing bar and catering operations, particularly in sporting environments. These have included Edgbaston Cricket Ground, Aintree Grand National, Cheltenham Gold Cup, Worcester Warriors and also offered consultancy services to Bath Rugby in the past. Brian also comes from a rugby playing background, having played for Battersea Ironsides as well as coaching for six years in their Mini Junior section. Most weeks Brian will be at the club on Monday and Wednesday during the day, as well as 1st team home matches.

Stuart and Brian are reviewing suppliers and prices to ensure we can offer good value quality food. Changes have already been made to provide locally sourced meat produce, as well as offering a more varied menu. Prosecco drinkers will be delighted to know that the price of a 250cl bottle has already been reduced from £7.60 to £6.50 and the Members pre-paid card price is only £5.90. The Members card really is fantastic value and can be obtained directly from the bar.

Stuart and Brian will also continue to keep opening times under review and use member volunteers to staff the bar where possible.

One consequence of expanding our commercial activities – which are needed to support the club financially - is that from time to time it will be necessary to close the bar early on a Saturday. One such occasion is the 25th of January for the Worcester Warriors Vs Wasps match when we have a party booked from 6.30pm. On the 25th of January the bar will be closed at 6.00pm and any Members/customers will be asked to vacate the

premises. Most Members/customers have left the club by this time so there should be little inconvenience. Your assistance would, however, be very much appreciated.

Stuart and Brian can be contacted via email – wrfclubhouse@outlook.com or would welcome a chat at the Club!

North Midlands RFU – RFU Council representative 2020 -2023

There will be an opportunity to represent North Midlands RFU on the RFU Council by way of an election later this year.

The term of office is for three years commencing on 1st August 2020. You will be representing clubs in Worcestershire & Herefordshire RFU, Shropshire RFU and Greater Birmingham RFU.

There are no candidate qualification criteria, and neither do you need to be a Club member or a member of the North Midlands RFU Committee to be eligible.

What you will be expected to provide though is your nomination in writing, proposed by one RFU Voting Club, and seconded by another in writing before the 1st March 2020.

Detailed information will be published at the beginning of February 2020 so please take this advert as early notice of the election.

North Midlands RFU is fully committed to equal opportunities and welcomes female applicants or applicants from other under-represented categories.

Robert Bray

Honorary Secretary

Celebrating the Work of our Volunteers

The success of our club is down to the hard work of the 100 or so volunteers that turnout every week - come rain or shine - to support teams and



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manage the work of the club. To celebrate the hard work of our volunteers the Management Committee members Vice-Presidents will be hosting a lunch for volunteers (alongside our sponsors) on Saturday 18 April to thank them for their unstinting work across all sections of the club and our sponsors for the continued generosity. The lunch coincides with the Droitwich 1st team game and we are expecting a full house. You can book a place by emailing wrfclubhouse@outlook.com

Please look out for details.

President Jim and I will also be inviting a small number of volunteers to the North Mids Centenary Celebration in June to thank them for their hard work (see item below).

NMRFU CENTENARY CELEBRATION DINNER

Saturday 20th June 2020.
Voco St Johns Hotel,
651 Warwick Road,
Solihull B91 1AT.

Black Tie and Cocktail Dresses.
Reception 7.00pm for 7.45pm.

Guest Speaker is Will Greenwood MBE and Master of Ceremonies is David Duckham MBE.

Tickets £75.00 each and tables are for up to ten.

Ticket reservations – please contact Charlie Hemmings, charliehemmings@btinternet.com or 07967 259379.

Discounted overnight B&B accommodation available at £89 single occupancy or £99 double occupancy at St Johns.

Please contact reservations@stjohnssolihull.co.uk or call 0121 712 7601 quoting North Mids Dinner and the date

(offer only available until 3 April 2020)

Dinner Sponsorship packages available on request

And finally...

We have had lots of positive feedback on the newsletter but appreciate many are still not receiving a copy. Please tells your friends about the newsletter and encouraging them to contact Jeff Crawshaw, Hon. Secretary, with their email address. The newsletter is for everyone – not just members.

Steve Lloyd
Chair



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