

Canterbury Rugby:

Making the city proud



Canterbury Rugby Football Club (CRFC) might be situated on the edge of the city, but there is much to admire in this established and ambitious club that wholeheartedly endeavours to serve the whole community. Let's applaud its success...

Founded in 1929, Canterbury Rugby Football Club is celebrating its 88th season – as well as numerous other accolades including being recognised at National level by the RFU having won in recent seasons both Best Managed Club and Best Community Club in the RFU President's annual awards. In the current rankings, as a National 2 South member, Canterbury is in the top 70 clubs in England. And like most sporting institutions up and down the land, CRFC could not exist without the tireless dedication of its loyal team of volunteers – an astonishing 90% of the work is done by them, headed up by Club Chairman Giles Hinton.



Meet **Andy Pratt**, Head of Rugby at CRFC

What does your job entail?

It's a wide role, with three aspects: the performance of the first team in the National League; development of rugby throughout the club (juniors, minis, coaching development and supporting volunteers); and our Community Programme – working with local primary and secondary schools and up to university level.

What are your aims for the season?

To improve on last year's position, which was just in the top half of the table. Many clubs spend a lot of money on bringing in players to buy success quickly, but the

money can dry up. We want to grow organically – basing the team on East Kent lads and developing youngsters locally to ensure a sustainable team.

Ones to watch?

That's a difficult question. Everyone matters! However, Max Cantwell (pictured below left), a Kent lad, is captain this year. He played for us as a colt – always one of the lads, he has now stepped forward to take responsibility as one of the leaders. We are also very pleased to have signed Matt Corker (pictured below right) as player coach. Matt was fully pro and captained London Welsh. He is from Kent and has moved back; his enthusiasm is outstanding and his



wealth of experience and knowledge, alongside that of other senior players, will take some pressure off Max.

What makes CRFC so special?

Our passionate crowd. It is a tough place for visiting teams and supporters want the club to succeed. But it's important to us to not lose our roots. We are one of the few remaining community clubs – with five men's teams, a women's team and Wheelchair, Touch, Mini and Youth sections. It's a big task, but we are passionate and proud. We want to be as good as we can be on the field with the first team, but not at the expense of the others.

Does local support matter?

The support of the community means a great deal to the lads. When we lost the opening game of the season the team was gutted. We really want to put on a good show for the club and fans and any new people – who we welcome to come along. Luckily, we put on a good performance away at rivals Tonbridge Juddians and got our pride back!

In the *family*

Iris Nasir is the youngest ever referee in Europe – at age just 11! Mum Sally is a member of the Canterbury Codgers Touch team and volunteers with the youngsters, while sister Flori has represented England and Dad is about to join in, too.

"It's a great game for all the family," says Sally, adding: "You can play at any age – as long as you can run up and down the pitch for 40 minutes.

"It's a fantastic way to be fit and really good socially. Come and have a go!"



5 reasons to support CRFC today!

1. National League 2 South is a high level – just three steps below the Premiership.
2. Join others in your community in a friendly environment – it feels great.
3. All ages and everyone in the family welcome – even your dog!
4. Entry and parking only £10: free for U18s.
5. Leave the screens and tablets at home, get some fresh air and have a good shout!



Juniors & Minis

Qualified coaches, enthusiasm, encouragement, appropriate age levels and a club that can offer support and progression: it's no accident that playing rugby builds skills for life.

The club's Junior section has produced two international players, both for Scotland. Prop forward Matt Stewart went onto play for Blackheath, Northampton and the Army and won 34 caps. In the current Scotland team, centre Huw Jones, whose dad is a local headmaster, is now established.

Huw is playing for Glasgow in the Pro 12 competition this season.

From age six, rugby is great way for boys and girls to keep fit, learn team play (winning and losing) and gain confidence – as well as being part of a great community club and a proud British tradition. Minis from U6 up to U11; juniors from U12 up to U18s.

Touch Rugby

Touch is for everyone: juniors, men's, women's and mixed. And with so many age categories you can enjoy family fun or be fast and furious, becoming fabulously fit whether you're competitive or not. So, it's no surprise that the game is expanding. In fact, Touch has nearly 20,000 people playing regularly and is one of England's fastest growing participation sports – with England Touch Association forging ahead with plans to deliver programmes to all ages, from schools to senior citizens.

Tom Humphreys is Touch Rugby Liaison at CRFC, where there are a wide variety of training sessions to choose from. With four England Men's Open Players about to compete in Australia there is plenty to celebrate.

• For more information, contact Tom Humphreys on 07795 546455 or email canterburytouch@gmail.com

Need a venue?

The CRFC clubhouse could be just the ticket for a great event. Parking, bar and excellent facilities. For more information, contact Catering Manager Ted Phillips on 07914 678679.

Canterbury Women

Inspired by England Women's performance in the World Cup this year? Want to know how to get involved? Dani Juden is both player and Media and Recruitment Co-ordinator for Canterbury Ladies, and has played since she was 13.

"Whilst the women's game is less 'brutal' than the men's, it's very skilled and has plenty of drama," she says. "You don't even have to play matches but can use it as an alternative fitness activity. It's a great benefit to work together as part of a team."

Dani describes the special bond between players, just like in the men's game, even including the opposition: "You get really fierce to take them on – and then laugh and joke in the bar afterwards. Rugby certainly doesn't mean that you can't be feminine as well. We are all very different women outside of rugby, but come together to play."

The team is committed to new players – from age 13 and up (when the game is separate from the boys). "You won't be asked to tackle our strongest player," she says, adding: "Give it a try!"



Wheelchair Rugby

A team named 'Canterbury Hellfire' tells you that wheelchair rugby is not for the fainthearted. Inspired after the sport was introduced in the 2012 Paralympics, Canterbury Hellfire has earned promotions and cup success, finally reaching the dizzy heights of the first division last season to compete with the top eight teams in the country. Luckily the team is on an upward trajectory: "It's a big step up for us, and we will be facing more international players," says Hellfire Chairman Brian Pitchford. "But as we moved up the league we became stronger and fitter." To add to that strength, the club will welcome a French international to travel with them to the Midlands (where matches are played over a weekend).

Wheelchair rugby is a mixed team sport for both male and female disabled athletes and is open to all from the age of 12. Hellfire travels with a mechanic and a physiotherapist – and there are lots of volunteering opportunities.

"This is a high-pressured game and we take it seriously," says Brian. "Players need sports massages and support, just like the first team. And our chairs need the mechanic!"

Canterbury Hellfire is delighted to receive fundraising from

companies such as Burgess Hodgson accountants, which has made the club their charity of choice this year.

PROUD TO SPONSOR

Rosie le Seilleur is Marketing Manager and member of the Charity Committee at Burgess Hodgson, which is dedicated to supporting sport in the community and takes great pride in sponsoring CRFC. After hearing that Hellfire had suffered cuts to their funding, it was an easy decision to extend that support by making them Charity of the Year.

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"We have been inspired by their dedication, motivation and enthusiasm," explains Rosie. "Coach Steve Brown [Captain of the GB team in 2012] presented to us, along with one of the young players, and we joined them in a training session. When you get in the wheelchair, you quickly realise how much skill is needed to stop, turn and control the ball!"

The firm has raised money in a variety of ways, including charity quizzes and cake sales.

And, as in previous years, the Canterbury Bike Ride, which takes place each September with a choice of three routes in and around the city, raises money for Wheelchair Rugby, along with Kent MS Therapy Centre and the Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance.



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Oktoberfest returns!

Saturday 14th October, 12.30pm-10pm

This established annual event celebrates Kentish real ale and cider and attracts visitors from near and far – but tickets are in demand, so get yours ahead of the game! The first XV match against Redruth kicks off 3pm; top this with tasty cooked food and live music from Queen II for a splendid autumn day out. Shuttle bus from Canterbury starts at noon. Tickets £7.50 in advance and £10 on the day.

• For a full list of ticket retailers for Oktoberfest, visit www.canterburyoktoberfest.co.uk



A Touch of Success

Flori Nasir (see In the Family), who attends Simon Langton Girls' Grammar School, was delighted to be selected to take the Schools Touch Referee Award. A keen player – she was in the team that represented England in Dublin earlier this year – Flori (front right in the photograph, left) took her skill further, going on to pass the level one referee course.

"I just love playing! Taking the course made me progress to being a better player, and although it's sometimes hard to pick out the little mistakes, refereeing has definitely boosted my confidence," said Flori, adding: "I had to learn all the correct signs, how to be fair to both teams – and to go with what I feel and not be swayed by the players! I would really recommend any school thinking about doing the course and the award to give it a go. Now I want to go on to play and referee at a higher level."



Message from *the Chairman*

The past few seasons have been some of the most rewarding and successful in Canterbury Rugby Club's 88-year history as we have extended our reach into the local community and beyond. The club has grown to offer rugby, in all its formats, to so many new people it has been remarkable. From our five senior teams, the boys and girls who join us in the minis from the age of six and progress through a terrific mini and junior section, to the Touch Rugby players, our brilliant Wheelchair Rugby section and the ladies team. All of them are part of a really vibrant club. We are also reaching out overseas through support for and links with Clark Jets in the Philippines, a club that brings rugby to some seriously disadvantaged young people.

What we have achieved has taken huge amounts of hard work from dedicated volunteers who give their time, expertise and energy so freely. We know we cannot rest on our laurels and must look to the future. To that end we have welcomed proposals from a local developer to move the club to a purpose built facility close to the city. All that is at an early stage, but we feel there are even more exciting times ahead.

Giles Hilton, Chairman, Canterbury RFC

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Contact CRFC

For more information on Canterbury Rugby Football Club – from how to join or become a spectator to fixtures and match reports, Touch or Wheelchair rugby, along with all relevant contact details, visit www.cantrugby.co.uk

• *Canterbury RFC, The Marine Travel Ground, Merton Lane North, Nackington Road, Canterbury, Kent CT4 7AZ, call 01227 761301.*