



THE GRIFFIN

A NEWSLETTER FOR OLD LAURENTIAN RFC MEMBERS
ISSUE 1 – OCTOBER 2016

Welcome to the first of what is intended to be a series of newsletters to keep all members, home and away, up to date with the latest news and gossip from the Club. It won't have the immediacy of the website or social media but will be able to go into greater detail than is practicable or possible on those media. The title is not, perhaps, the most imaginative or original but it's the best that has sprung to mind so far. Any suggestions for an alternative masthead will be gratefully received, as will any contributions for inclusion. Ideas, please, to Bill Wallis at billwallis45@gmail.com, or on 01788 333043

New website launched

If you have visited the club's old website over the last few months you will have been thoroughly frustrated to find that it had not been updated for some time. Fret no more as all that has now changed with the launch of a brand new website, which can be reached at the same domain name www.olsrugby.com. The new site uses the RFU template, which means that all league and cup fixtures and results are automatically uploaded to it. Match reports can be instantly accessed from the home page and it also has links to the club's Twitter and Facebook pages; and, once you have registered, you can pay your club subscription or enrol in the 1200 Club through it. Its development is still in the early stages and further refinements will continue to be made. So please be patient! Chairman Spriggs has driven the project through, with the very able support of Kevin Mortimer and Matthew Pritchard.

The previous website and its predecessor were developed and managed by **Ray Todd** over a number of years; and also during that time, Ray took literally thousands of photographs of club matches and events. Thanks, Ray, for your major contribution to club affairs over that time.

All change at the top

There are a number of new faces in key roles at the club for season 2016/17 – not new in the strict sense of the word as most are well known to members, but taking up new jobs in the club. First, our new Chairman, **Andrew Spriggs** (pictured) is known to almost everyone as he has been a member since 1972 and must be close to holding the club record for playing



longevity as you are still likely to see him turning out for the 3rd team even now. A combative second row forward, Spriggs is already tackling his new job with the same gusto and enthusiasm that has typified his playing style

over the last (almost!) 45 years. Andrew succeeds Dan Volkman, who certainly made his mark as Chairman over the last two years. If you haven't received Andrew's pre-season letter directly you can read it on the new website (*see article opposite*). Continuing as Hon. Secretary is **Alan Willis**, who must also be close to a record tenure for this job. Taking on the key role of Treasurer is **Matthew Pritchard**, who joined the club via the Mini & Junior section and who, with his wife Sue and Dan Volkman, has been one of the key influences behind the tremendous growth and success of the M & Js over the last 8 years.

On the playing side, **Stuart Birch** has stepped down from the role of Head Coach. Stuart has been outstanding as player, 1st team captain and, for almost all of the last 15 years, as Coach. We are delighted that Stuart will continue to support and mentor our new coaching team and will still be very much on the scene. Stepping into Stuart's size twelves is another former player of some distinction, **Iain Wallis**. Iain is joined in the coaching team by **David Longrigg**, another with a long pedigree in both playing and administration at the club; and a welcome newcomer, **Andy Milner**, who brings impeccable credentials with him as an RFU Community Rugby Coach in the East Midlands.

VP's Lunch, Saturday 29th October

This season's VP's Lunch is booked for Saturday 29th October, 12.00 for 12.30, cost £20.00 per head. The lunch will be followed by the Midlands 2 East (S) game against Belgrave, which kicks off at 3.00pm. It's a great opportunity to meet up with friends old and new, enjoy a good lunch and have a few beers. If you haven't yet booked, then Alan Willis will be delighted to hear from you. You can reach Alan by email at awillis4@hotmail.co.uk; or you can call him on 01788 813481

The season so far

A reasonable start to season 2016/17 with 14 games played by the club as a whole up to 14th October, of which 10 have been won.

Now playing in Midlands 2 East (South) the 1st XV have won 3 out of 4 league matches so far and sit in 4th place in the table, on the same points as the third placed club but with an inferior points difference. This season sees us pitched against a number of clubs we haven't met before, or haven't met for many years and our opening 4 league games were against new opponents in each case. An away win at Olney (20-12) was followed by an impressive home victory over Oundle (33-18). An injury hit side then came unstuck at Peterborough, where a well organised home side had the better of us in a 31-8 reversal; but we got back to winning ways when Rushden & Higham visited Fenley Field and, won 29-22, scoring five tries and earning a try bonus point. Subsequently the team won their 2nd round Intermediate Cup game against Kidderminster, running out handsome 59-24 winners to go into the 3rd round draw.

The real stars of the season so far have been the 2nd XV who had a 100% record after five games but then went down narrowly to Earlsdon (10-14) when the 1st XV called on almost half of their regular side. They are second in Warwickshire League 1 and have amassed over 250 points so far. A balanced blend of experience and youth, impressively led by flanker Nick Martin, their progress has been subject to regular calls made on their squad by the 1st XV. Some years after he last appeared in a 1st XV jersey, hooker Gary 'Gusher' Hammond looks as mean and as lean as in his heyday and leads the 2nds try scoring table with five tries from his four games, closely followed by another vet in Ben Shepherd with four touchdowns. When they are absent, as in the team's recent 57-5 win at Leamington, the young guns take over, this time Chris Halcrow notching 22 points with two tries and six conversions.

All change at the top (cont'd)

Taking on the captaincy of the 1st XV this season is **Ben Wiles**, a talented centre three-quarter, whilst **Nick Martin** continues as 2nd XV skipper. The 3rd XV have joint captains, **Barry Hipwell** and **Adi Marsh** who are together tackling the sometimes troublesome task of getting a 3rd team out. They will join forces with the Vets from time to time to ensure that a team takes to the field

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The season so far (cont'd)

The 3rd XV have had just two outings at time of writing, wining one and losing one. A pleasing aspect of their early season has been the arrival of new players enticed in by the RFU's Return to Rugby initiative, which the club is promoting; and, encouragingly, a couple of them have come from the ranks of mini and junior players' parents. But, as ever, it often remains a struggle for joint skippers Barry Hipwell and Adie Marsh to raise a full 15 on match days, so any former players (or novices who fancy dipping a toe into the water) will always be welcome.



Remember, remember the fifth of November,

Gunpowder treason and plot

*Join us at Fenley Field for the best bonfire
night in Rugby*

Club Development

You may have heard rumours about the Club's development plans, including the possibility of re-location, and these are not without foundation. But this has been put on hold as the Old Laurentian Society progresses the potential of a land swap and until we have certainty as to the future it would not be appropriate to fuel the speculation that goes along with such changes. All we can say at this stage is that the intention is for OLRFC to remain a community Rugby Club in the Bilton area of the town which will carry forward the legacy of Lol Fenley and the other founders of the Club.

OLs Phoenix Ladies

Now in their third season, Phoenix Ladies have grown to a squad of over 25 players. Playing touch rugby, the team are in the Midland Ladies Touch League and have hosted a League tournament when 13 other clubs visited Fenley Field and laid on a feast of skilful and entertaining rugby. Captained by Nic Marsh and coached by former 1st XV captain Olly Cowley, Phoenix Ladies welcome new members, who will enjoy the fitness benefits of regular exercise without the rigours of the contact game.

The men's section is pleased and grateful to have the support of the Phoenix Ladies, who regularly appear on match days at Fenley Field and support the club in practical ways, like selling programmes on the gate.



Minis, Juniors and Colts

*Just 8 years after it was first launched, with 20 youngsters there on its first day, the Club's Mini and Junior section has grown to become one of the biggest and best in Warwickshire, now numbering over 400 boys and girls under the chairmanship of **Ian McPherson**. As the club has grown and developed, so they have gone up through the age groups and the senior team is now the Under 15 squad, of whom much is expected. As Under 14s last season they were virtually unbeatable, with a squad big enough to turn out 2 full teams. The trick now is to take as many of them as possible through to senior rugby and to that end the club is attempting to put together both Under 16 and Colts teams for this season. Leading that initiative are Dan Volkman, Russ Parkinson and Andre Nutter whose principal task is to manage the transition of junior players through to the senior teams.*

Both sections of the club, Senior and M & J, are agreed that to realise the club's ambitions both need to move forward with a 'one club' attitude and the necessary changes to ensure that this goal is achieved will be implemented as necessary.

More about the Minis & Juniors in our next issue as their season develops

OLRFC 1200 Club

If you haven't already signed up for this monthly draw, which is an important source of funds for the club, then now is a good time to do so as the prize fund has just been increased.

The first draw for this season took place on 1st October and the winners were:

1st prize of £150: **Ray 'Stingray' Smith**

2nd prize of £100: **Tom Gleghorn**

3rd prize of £50: **Darren Price**

4th prize of £25: **Charlie Seager**

As yet more members signed up just before the October draw, the prize fund has been increased and the monthly prizes now total £400, and the split is now £200 for 1st prize, £100 for 2nd and £50 each for 3rd and 4th, with effect from the next draw.

To quote Chairman Sprigga, you need to **BEINIT2WINIT**. You can join via the club website, but you will need to register first. Just go to the 'Membership' page from the home page. Or you can always contact Andy Spriggs at aws-sms-sjls@ntlworld.com or on 07967 698364 and he will be delighted to sign you up. The next draw will be at the VP's Lunch on Saturday 29th October.

The Griffin Club

After running the Griffin Club for what seems like forever, **Pete and Kathy Staines** stepped down from the job this season and handed over the reins to **Mick Bass**. Our very grateful thanks go to Pete and Kathy for all their work in keeping the Club going over the years.

If you have seen the terrific lunches that Helen lays on for the Griffin Club before each home 1st XV game and fancy some yourself, it's not too late to join the Club for this season. The annual cost for a couple is £110.00 and for a single member it's £60.00, but Mick can do a deal for you if you join part way through the season. At time of writing there are still 9 lunches to go this season so contact Mick on 07742 140068 to join.

The Social Scene

Once more in charge of the social scene at the club is **Richard Hayes**, very ably supported by **Cain Jones**. They have planned a full series of events that is already under way and continues with a Hallowe'en party on 29th October (if you have the stamina you could make a day of it, starting with the VP's Lunch!)

The Children's Christmas Party is booked in for 17th December; and there is a full programme planned for the New Year, starting with an event that has become a very popular fixture in the calendar in recent years, Burns Night. To follow in 2017 will be a St Patrick's Day party and, to keep the home flag flying after catering for the Scots and the Irish, an event to celebrate St George's Day. Full details will appear on the website and Facebook

