

Official magazine of Weybridge Vandals RFC

The Vandal



March 2021



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MEET THE FIRST XV

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Dear reader,

Welcome to the second edition of The Vandal Magazine and to say the last six months have been among the strangest on record at Brownacres would be an understatement.

This season may not have gone completely according to plan as we all sit twiddling our thumbs during the third Covid-19 lockdown in the space of 12 months, however, there is plenty in this edition to keep you going until the summer.

Speaking of Covid, in the club's hour of need a very special person stepped up to the plate over Christmas and the new year to lend a helping hand in memory of her beloved husband, so please take a look at our Covid Crowdfunding update (page 10-11) for the latest on Vandals' guardian angel.

During the latest lockdown some lofts were cleared out and one member uncovered a relic from seasons past, so this seemed like a good opportunity for a nostalgic look back at the making of The Vandals Calendar 2003 (page 32).

We take another look at some of the club's historic surroundings in Elmbridge with a lockdown stroll to Coxes Lock (page 20-22) and we celebrate Mr Vandals' 80th year as we chat with the legend that is John Farrow – player, captain, scribe and stash merchant (page 14-17).

There is also time to take a look at what it's like to start a catering and hospitality company in lockdown with club sponsor McLaren Fine Foods (page 40-42).

And with all the usual pictures from around the club in our Rogue's Gallery (page 9 and 13) and Desborough Island Discs with first team fly half Joe Spencer (page 28), there is plenty for everyone to get their teeth into.

Thanks for your support.

Stuart Amos



Sing it loud: Editor Stuart Amos

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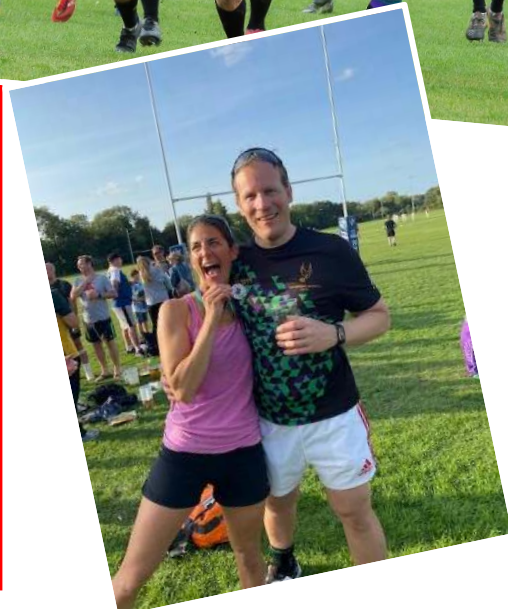
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Rogues Gallery



The old normal: (clockwise from top) Former first team captain and current RFU chairman Andy Cosslett poses with club shirts adorning the Twickenham stands during the Nations Cup in the autumn; Vandals shirts at Twickenham; the U7s got back to rugby in September; London Irish centre Terrence Hepetema was named assistant colts and seniors coach in October; and, U14s head coach Paul Webb, *right*, starred on the club's Insta feed the same month.



If you have a picture you want to share with Rogues Gallery, please send it – with brief details - to... weybridgevandalsrfcmagazine@gmail.com.

Ex-president's widow gives Covid Crowdfund a boost

Guardian angel

'Once a Vandal, always a Vandal' has long been a saying connected with all those who have worn the green, purple and black during the course of the club's 88-year history, writes Stuart Amos.

And never more has that been proven the case than during the course of the Covid-19 pandemic that has paralysed the UK and the world over the past year.

Back in March 2020 – and in the face of the first national lockdown - the club launched its GoFundMe initiative that raised more than £9,000, through donations from members past and present, from far and wide.

With a glaring £50,000 hole in club finances coming into view due to the cancellation of a host of key fundraising events and sporadic senior and junior rugby under new guidelines, it was going to take something special for the club to survive lockdown 3.0.

A new Crowdfunding drive with the aim to fill that void, raised £31,500 via donations from more than 300 club members past and present, which is where one special person came in.

Former president Eric Davies, a first team player in the 1950s for both rugby and cricket sections, sadly died in March 2019.

But his legacy will forever live on at Brownacres thanks to his widow Heidi – the club's guardian angel – after she agreed to go beyond her initial pledge to match every pound donated by adding a cool £50,000 to the pot.

With gift aid swelling the coffers by further £12,500, the crowdfunding campaign has banked a grand total of £94,000.



Legacy: Ex-president Eric Davies' influence is still being felt at Vandals

"I didn't expect this huge thank you. I know Eric would be pleased he could help the club in this way," said Heidi in a message to current

president Kevin Keaney, who had previously thanked her for her support.

"I just wanted to make a gift to the club and to the sport he loved where he had had good times and shared it with his friends.

"Your guardian angel wishes you and all Vandals a merry Christmas and hopefully a better 2021."

Keaney, who launched the crowdfunding page in December with the help of daughter Molly and Matt Stoney, added: "It has been great to see donations coming from all sections of the club including netball and cricket and with donations coming in from as far afield as Australia, California and Canada.

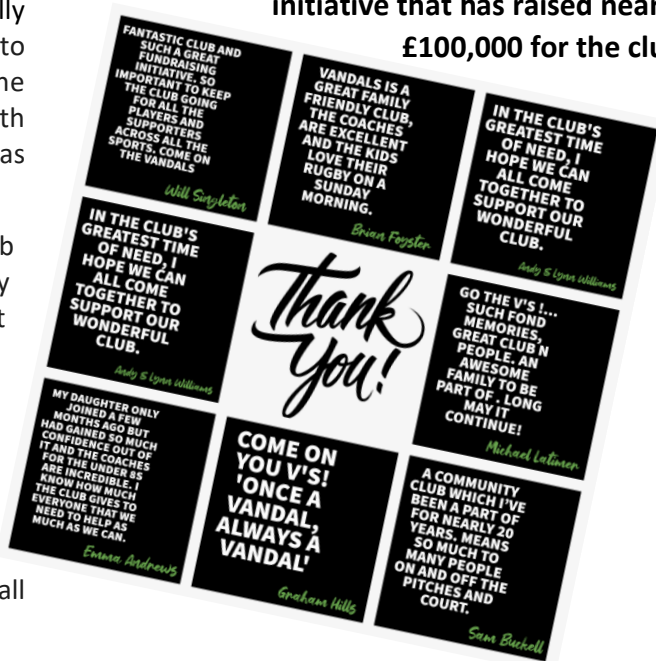
"It is a real reminder of how much our club means to so many people. I have been very humbled by all the messages of support people have taken time to write on the crowdfunding page.

"These funds mean the club is well placed to not only survive this dreadful pandemic without having to take on significant debt, but we will also now be able to improve our facilities for the benefit of all members in all our sports.

"I look forward to being able to update you on these improvements in the weeks and months ahead and for you being able to see them yourselves once we are able to re-open the club.

"The rapid roll out of the vaccines certainly gives us hope for the future."

Thanks: Messages from the Vandals' crowdfunding page, an initiative that has raised nearly £100,000 for the club



Eric Davies –

Davies represented the club with distinction on the pitch, playing first team rugby and cricket throughout the 50s.

Arguably Davies - who was president for the 1975/76 season – bettered his on-field contributions in serving the club in various key roles, most notably project managing the building of what at the time was a unique 'new changing room facility' at Brownacres.

He also represented the club on the Surrey County RFU committee during the 1970s,



Back row: (from left) R. Roper, R. Montgomery, G. White, J. Crawley, J. Byford, J. Finney, G. Huxley, M. Close.

Middle row: (from left) A. Brooks, P. Mamalis, D. Hunt, H. Whelan (capt), A. Inglis, B. Cambray.

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Rogues Gallery



Lift off: (anti-clockwise from left) Weybridge Vandals launched a new online club shop with kit partners RAM in November to the delight of parents and kids, *below*. Order kit and off-field stash at ramrugby.co.uk/collections/weybridge-vandals-rfc-club-shop; Karl Hoade gets a little help keeping fit from assistant coach and dad David at the start of the year. The first team squad have been completing online team fitness competitions on Zoom during lockdown 3.0. Team Plank, led by lock Andy Tyrell, collected two wins in the first weeks of the year; and, Harlequins fly-half Marcus Smith, *right*, and winger Cadan Murley sent the Vandals junior section a video message of support and advice via Instagram during lockdown 2.0 in November:

If you have a picture you want to share with Rogues Gallery, please send it – with brief details – to....
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Skipper, scribe and stash merchant reflects on 50 years.....



Back in the day: Skipper John Farrow, front row third from left and inset, with the class of 1974, who once downed Sussex champs Crawley 6-3

.....always a Vandal

For a man who has seen it all at Weybridge Vandals, John Farrow is convinced the current crop of first team stars is the best team seen at Brownacres in his 50 years at the club.

Farrow, who arrived on Desborough Island fresh out of teacher training college in 1970, celebrates his 81st birthday this year and has born witness to the club's significant growth over the past half-century.

From the establishment of the club's colts section under Barry Welfare and Graham Francis in 1970 and the arrival of the first senior coach at Vandals in 1978, to the consolidation of the men's first team in the London leagues in the 1990s and 2000s the ex-skipper has lived through it all.

And while the club's official match reporter wrote extensively on the 2008-09 London Division Four South West title winners, it is the current crop of Surrey Cup champions – under head coach Damian Porter and assistant David Hoade - that gets his vote for the most pleasing to watch.

“Damian and David have done a terrific job over the past couple of seasons, given the circumstances,” said Farrow.

“The team play such a fast brand of rugby. They are superbly coached and the players have got a great attitude.

“In the old days players would just turn up and play at the weekend, but the coaching set-up now sees everybody training and you can see the results on the pitch.

“I think they had a pretty good season last time before things were cut short and I think they would have had a better season this time around.”

Farrow, a former PE teacher at what is now Chertsey High School, joined Vandals in 1970 and became first team hooker under captain Jerry Abbottt before stepping into the role himself in 1974.

He admitted it wasn't the most successful season in the club's history, but did produce two of the highlights of his rugby career.

“I took over when the club was going through a bit of a bad spell. We weren't winning that many games,” he added.

“I remember we used to play the third teams of the likes of London Irish, London Scottish and London Welsh in those days.

“We played Irish on the third Saturday of the season. Ireland & British Lions hooker Ken Kennedy was just back from holiday after the Lions tour to South Africa and fancied a runout.

“I packed down for the first scrum and I didn't even see the ball until it came out their side. I had this vision in my head of not winning a single scrum for the whole 80 minutes.

“But I managed to strike six against the head that day, although I think that was largely because the props he had either side of him weren't much cop.”



Super job: First team head coach Damian Porter, above, and his assistant David Hoade, left, have had a positive effect on the club's fortunes

He continued: “In one of the few games we won that year – and there weren't many - we managed to beat Sussex champions Crawley. And that was a great result for us at the time. That was a real highlight.

“We won a ‘thriller’ 6-3 thanks to two drop goals from fly-half Derek Seymour – a former Vandals president. His son also went on to play fly half for the first team in the late 90s and early 2000s.”

“Mike [Hart] wasn’t a great player, but he was a fantastic captain. The success of the club then and for years after, was down to his leadership.”

- John Farrow, club stalwart & former RAM Rugby sales guru

Soon after Farrow stepped down as captain Dave Bevan arrived in 1978 as the club’s first coach and his determination to make the team the fittest it could be soon bore fruit.

Endless laps of the first team pitch in training helped Vandals win a then-record 17 games in a season one year, before bettering that record by one win 12 months later.

Farrow - who also played first team cricket for Weybridge during the 70s, scoring a couple of Surrey Championship hundreds and numerous half-centuries - went on to captain the second and the fourth team to relative success and appeared for the Owls until 1995 when he hung up his boots aged 55.

He attributes Mike Hart’s stint as skipper between 1976 and 1978 as the catalyst for the success that followed in gaining promotion to the London leagues – the first time in the 90s – and the silverware that has followed in the club’s recent history.

“Mike wasn’t a great player but he was a fantastic captain,” said Farrow, who has run five London marathons with the last - aged 74 - seeing him finish in six hours, 35 minutes.

“He really galvanised the players and got them playing for him. The success of the club then and for years after was down to his leadership.

“We’ve had some great presidents in my time too – like Peter Annett - who have really put



High praise: Ex-president Gareth Owen, above, and current incumbent Kevin Keaney, right

their all into the club and made significant contributions.

None more so than former president Gareth Owen and current incumbent Kevin Keaney.”

And as for why Farrow, who still visits the club regularly having spent more than 20 years writing match reports, keeps coming back for a glass of red on a Saturday afternoon and a watch of the rugby?

“Everybody tends to get on with each other, there is no real hierarchy,” he added from his retirement flat in Weybridge where he enjoys annoying the neighbours in the communal area with his four training sessions-a-week.

“There is always one or two players who think they are god’s gift to the club, but in general Vandals is special because it is so welcoming. I feel comfortable there. It feels like home.”

Once over: John Farrow casts his eye
over pre-season training last summer



“Everyone tends to get on with each other. There is always one or two players who think they are god’s gift to the club, but in general Vandals is special because it is so welcoming. I feel comfortable there. It just feels like home.”

-ex-Vandals captain John Farrow

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History in the making



Lock-side life: Coxes Lock Mill strikes an imposing figure on the banks of the Wey Navigations today

Weybridge, with its exclusive gated communities, technology start-ups, FTSE 100 corporations and coffee shops is certainly considered more commuter belt than industrial heartland, writes Stuart Amos.

However, more than 250 years ago the town and its surrounding areas were – believe it or not - at the forefront of the first industrial revolution later spawning some of the most significant commercial buildings in the country.

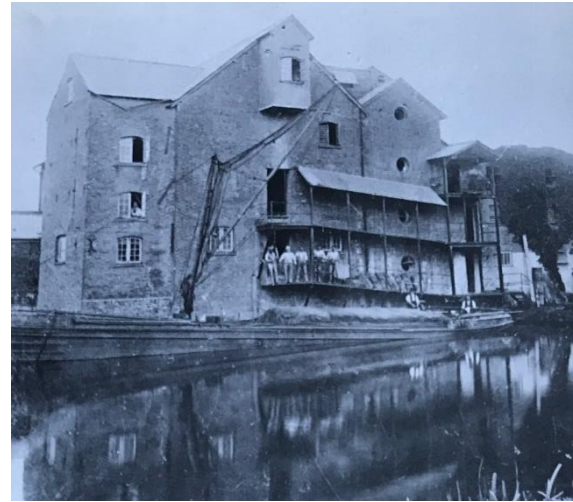
Coxes Lock, part of the National Trust's Wey Navigations connecting Weybridge via Addlestone to London, Guildford and beyond, has become a go to hotspot for lockdown walks and bike rides over the past 12 months.

Built between 1651 and 1653 and improved in 1770, the lock caught the attention of an iron entrepreneur who would build the mill and mill pond that now bears his name.

The three mill buildings are now home to an exclusive apartment complex complete with swimming pool and gym for residents, but for more than 200 years prior to the Grade II listed site's redevelopment they were a mixture of industrial mill, foundry and staff accommodation.

Coxes Lock Mill, built in 1777, was first established to supply iron ware to the Royal Navy in its war against rebellious American colonists. The ore used was extracted from St George's Hill.

It was the last commercially operated mill in Surrey when it closed in 1983, having produced iron, flour and silk on its way to becoming one



Multi-purpose: Coxes Lock Mill has been a corn, iron, silk and corn roller mill in its time. This picture, with a Stevens & Sons barge in the foreground, was taken in 1900

of the most important industrial buildings of its type in the UK.

At its peak in the mid-1960s it was producing 60 tonnes of flour every day, with steam and electricity replacing the water power once sourced from the canal and mill pond.



Growing old gracefully: Coxes Lock Mill as it stood in 1912

The large Wey barges, owned by Stevens and Sons, transported grain from the Royal Docks in London to Coxes Mill until the late 1960s.

Now the stretch is popular with canoeists, paddle boarders, dog walkers, cyclists and ramblers taking their lockdown exercise and is home to many types of fish, dragonfly, mayfly, butterflies and pond skaters.

The succession of lockdowns during the Covid crisis has introduced a host of new fans to the area, as families have pounded the footpaths along the canal having been forced to look locally for the means to entertain themselves.

Imagine what Mr Cox and subsequent mill owners Alexander Raby - an ironmaster from South Wales - and John Bunn would have made of that?

Coxes Lock and the Wey Navigations are managed by the National Trust. Visit nationaltrust.org.uk to discover more.



Lazy days: Children paddle their feet in the canal at Coxes Lock



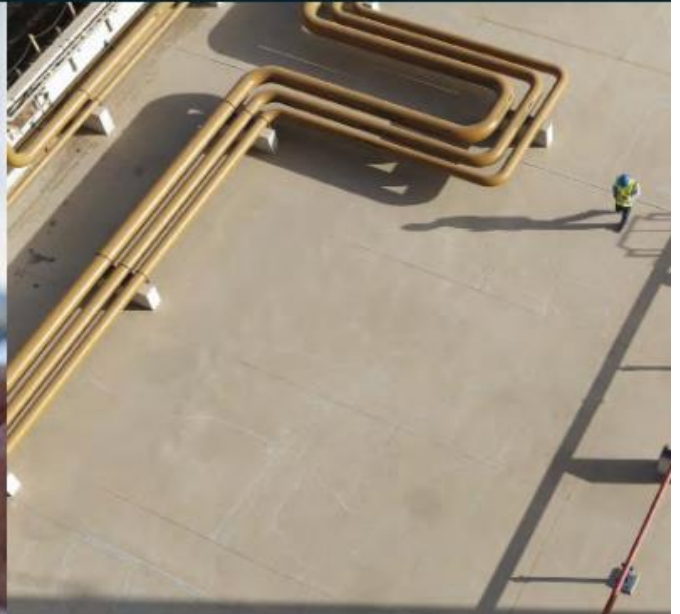
Picture perfect: Views across the mill pond are stunning at the height of summer



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Good luck Weybridge Vandals! We wish you every success in 2021.

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Here to help: Senior nursing team members, *from left*, Laura, Naomi and Shelagh bring the personal touch to Woking & Sam Beare Hospice and Wellbeing Care



Chosen charity

Woking & Sam Beare Hospice and Wellbeing Care is delighted to be chosen as Charity of the Year by the Weybridge Vandals.

We thank everyone at the club so much for your wonderful support and we are looking forward to being part of the Vandals 'team'.

Your support during this year will help our charity to care for more than 2,000 adults with life-limiting conditions, and their families and carers, both at home and in our hospice.

We care for more than 70% of our patients in their own homes across North West Surrey. This means that our community nurses can be providing free end-of-life care in your immediate community, directly helping people you may know.

We cannot do any of our vital work without your support. At Weybridge Vandals you are all champions to Woking & Sam Beare Hospice, even before you touch a rugby ball this season.

Woking & Sam Beare Hospice and Wellbeing Care

The involvement of the Vandals will have a positive impact on families just like yours at a most vital time in their lives.

At our hospice in Goldsworth Park we offer both respite and end-of-life care in our en-suite rooms. Our nurses and doctors work with each patient to make them comfortable based on their individual needs, while delivering high-quality nursing care.

It's important to us to get to know each patient's preferences and how we can help them.

Each member of our team plays an important part in this personal approach – for example, our cleaners and hostesses are always ready with a smile and to chat while they are in our patients' rooms. Our hospice is a place where laughter is often heard.

Woking & Sam Beare Hospice also supports each patient's carers to reassure them and to help them understand what to expect from their loved one's illness.

We aim to reduce the uncertainty and relieve the pressure of caring that many people can naturally feel, to enable them to enjoy simply spending time together as a family or friends.

As a local charity, we are committed to continuing to care for our community despite any challenges the year may bring.

Our dedicated team of staff and volunteers have responded flexibly to meet the ever-changing needs posed by the pandemic during 2020, and funds raised by the Weybridge Vandals will help us to continue to do so.

The involvement of the Vandals will have a positive impact on families just like yours at a most vital time in their lives.

Woking & Sam Beare Hospice and Wellbeing Care

We are finding different ways to communicate and to reassure, engaging with patients at home through phone and video calls if it is difficult to visit in person.

Counselling and day care services are being planned differently for the future as many of our hospice users rely on the companionship, relaxation and support they find in those services.

It costs more than £9 million each year to deliver our care.

We cannot do any of our vital work without your support. Hospice care is important and relevant to all of us, so thank you for helping us to care for our community. At Weybridge Vandals you are all champions to Woking & Sam Beare Hospice, even before you touch a rugby ball this season.



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Desborough Island Discs:

Joe Spencer

With a 20-year association with the club, Joe Spencer has spent a lot of time on Desborough Island.

The 27-year-old fly half joined Vandals at the turn of the century and has gone on to play a major role in the first team's revival in recent seasons.

He helped former head coach Merlin O'Donnell's men secure promotion to the London Leagues with a 22-18 Surrey Division One play-off triumph at Sandown & Shanklin in 2019.

And he was part of the squad that lifted the Surrey Cup thanks to a 31-25 victory over Old Mid-Whitgiftians at Esher RFC that same season.

Here, Shepperton-based Spencer talks about the eight songs, one book and one luxury item he would want with him if he were to be stranded at Brownacres.

Walking in Memphis – Marc Cohn. This can often be heard sung by me at any opportunity – whether people want to hear it or not. My absolute go-to karaoke song of choice.

Five o'clock somewhere – Alan Jackson. There is never a bad time for a beer at Brownacres and this song just about sums that up.

Beer never broke my heart – Luke Combs. This song is on this list because it hasn't. I was meant to be seeing Luke at the O2 in March, but it has just been cancelled for the second year in a row. The only reason every song of his isn't on this list is because I'm trying not to seem too boring.



Silverware: Weybridge Vandals fly half and Luke Combs enthusiast Joe Spencer, left, with the Surrey Cup claimed in 2019

Africa – Toto. The drunken table piano version of this song performed by Amos after the Vandals 'Surrey Lunch' at The Ship Hotel in 2019 was a sight to behold. I think he was about 15 pints in, pretending to play the piano and the flipping the table at every chorus.

Drops of Jupiter – Train. One of my all-time favourite songs!

Karma Chameleon – Culture Club. The video for this song was filmed on the island, so it has to be on the list.

September – Earth, Wind and Fire. My mum would never forgive me if I didn't choose any disco, so this song from Trolls makes the cut.

Walking Down Canal Street – traditional. rugby song. If you know this song, you know.

Probably the less said about this the better, but it is a classic of the genre.

Luxury item: A speaker system to play all of the above on.

Book: As a man who is not a huge reader, my chosen book would be any edition of *The Vandal* [Ed - Joe wasn't paid to say that].



Team player: Joe Spencer, *above*, leaving Simon Boffee, *right*, in his wake during an inter-club clash; Spencer, *far left*, marking the end of the 2019 season with team-mates



Butter wouldn't melt: Joe Spencer as a nipper when he first joined Vandals





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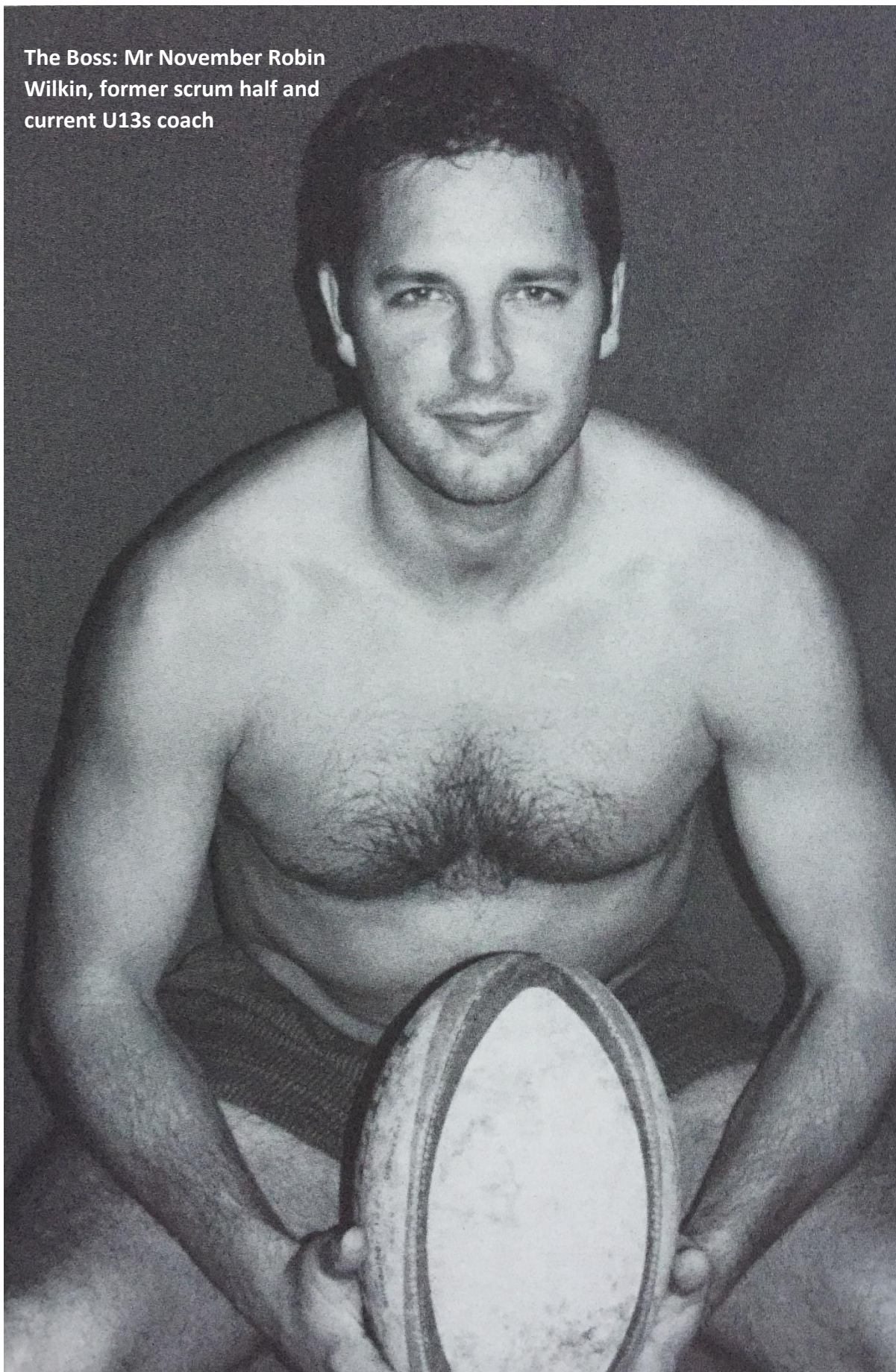


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The Boss: Mr November Robin Wilkin, former scrum half and current U13s coach



The shoot, the mistakes and the mysterious model



Back in the day: Members of the Weybridge Vandals first team squad pose for the cover picture of the 2003 Vandals Calendar

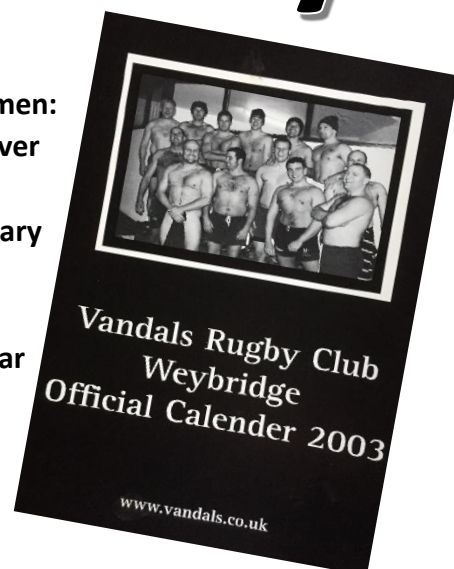
Calendar Boys

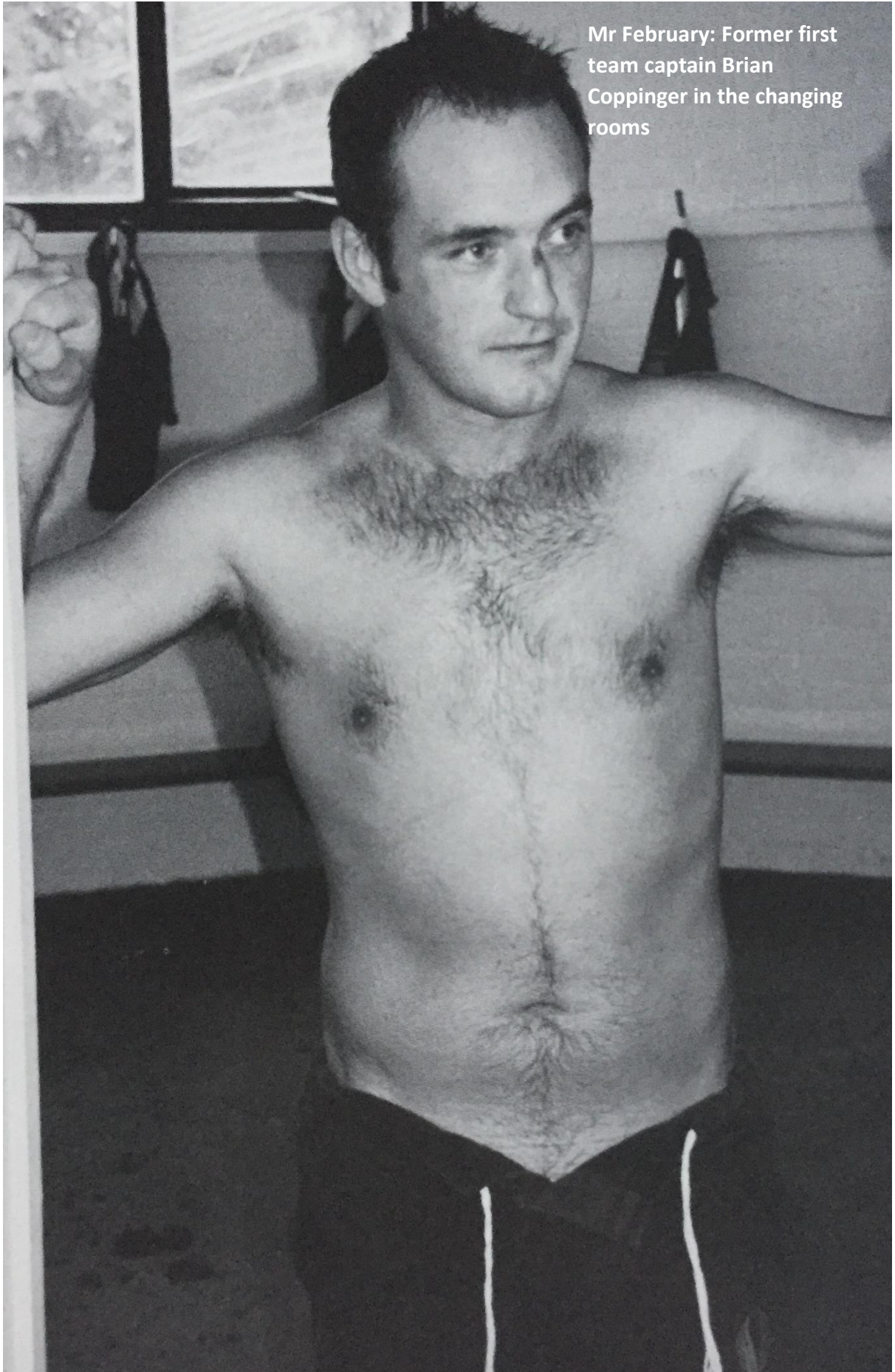
'My memory of it is a bit jaded. I think I was seriously hungover that day from the night before' is never the line you want to hear when asking someone to recall a significant moment in history, writes Stuart Amos.

But that is how long time Vandals associate Kate Emmas responded when challenged to share her recollections of the day the 2003 Vandals Calendar came into being.

Seventeen years since its release, a lockdown clear out means the legendary stocking filler featuring 17 shots of the club's first teamers –

**Front men:
The cover
of the
legendary
2003
official
calendar**





Mr February: Former first team captain Brian Coppinger in the changing rooms

Selection was easy. If you were fit your picture was on a 31-day month. If not, you got shorter.

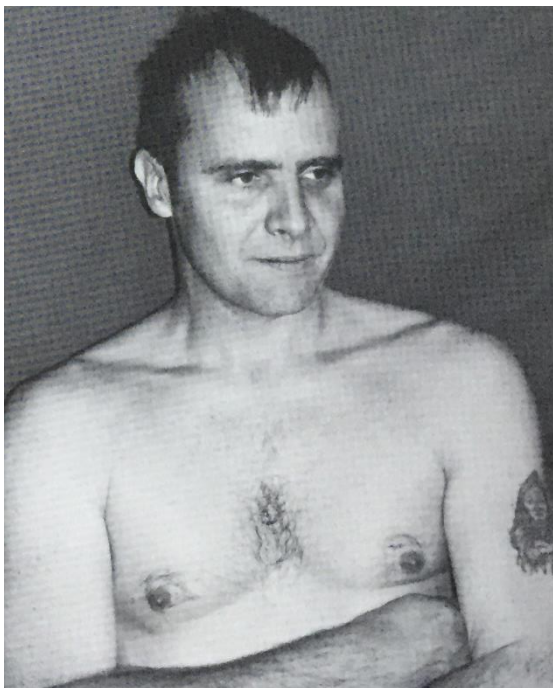
- Kate Emmas, calendar photographer

and one complete random – in varying stages of undress, once again sees the light of day.

Emmas and former president Gareth Owen's wife Sue were the brains behind the fundraising idea inspired by a similar calendar launched by England Rugby the same year.

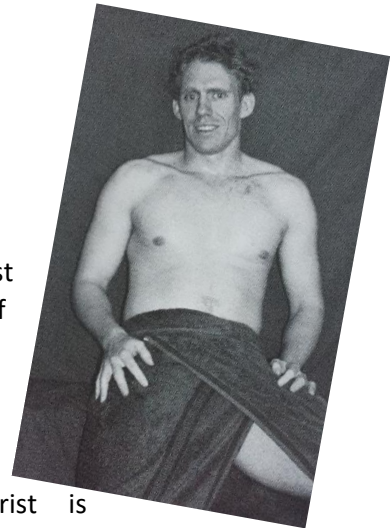
And to this day the circumstances of how one unknown person got in on the act, remain a mystery.

"It was one of those things where we just organised to do the photos at the club one



Have you seen this man?: This chap featured on the back cover, but who is he? IF you think you know contact the Vandal (see contacts page)

**Chocks away:
Mr August
flanker Ollie
Sell, right**



Sunday, almost on the spur of the moment," said Emmas, whose brother-in-law Matt Grist is chairman of the club's minis section.

"We sent out a message telling people that if they wanted to get involved then they should come down and we'd take it from there.

"It was the same year the England team did something similar, so we just copied the poses from that and got on with it.

"What was weird was that given it was a Sunday, there were a load of colts around and there we were taking pictures of Ollie Sell (ex-first team flanker and second team captain) naked in the shower.

"There were loads of rugby players walking around with their tops off. And there was one random bloke, who no-one knew, who had his picture taken.

"I still have no idea who he was and I don't think anyone did. He must have been one of the parents from the colts or something, I guess."

Emmas, who now lives in East Sheen with fiancée Dan having grown up in Pyrford, has fond memories of the whole project that was designed to raise funds for the club – even if they are a little hazy.

It proved a family affair with sister Jane, current club shop manager and then a publisher with Newmarket, providing printing and design expertise.

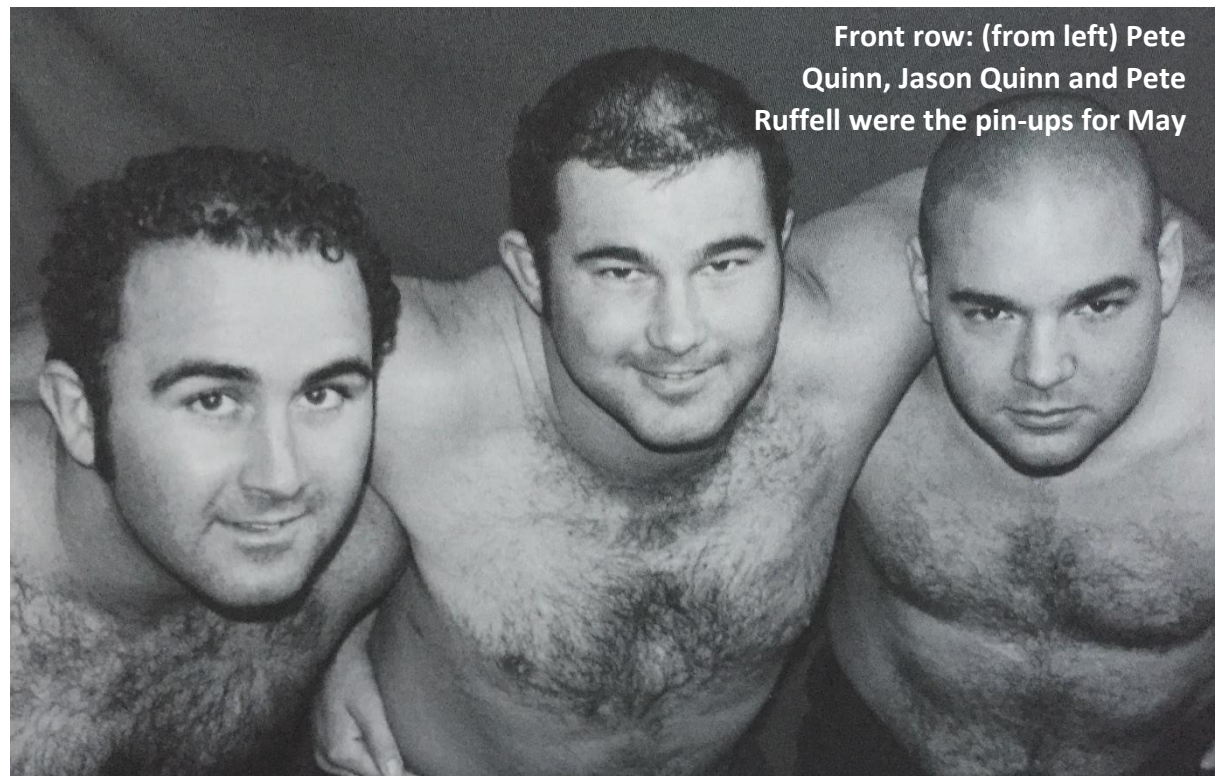
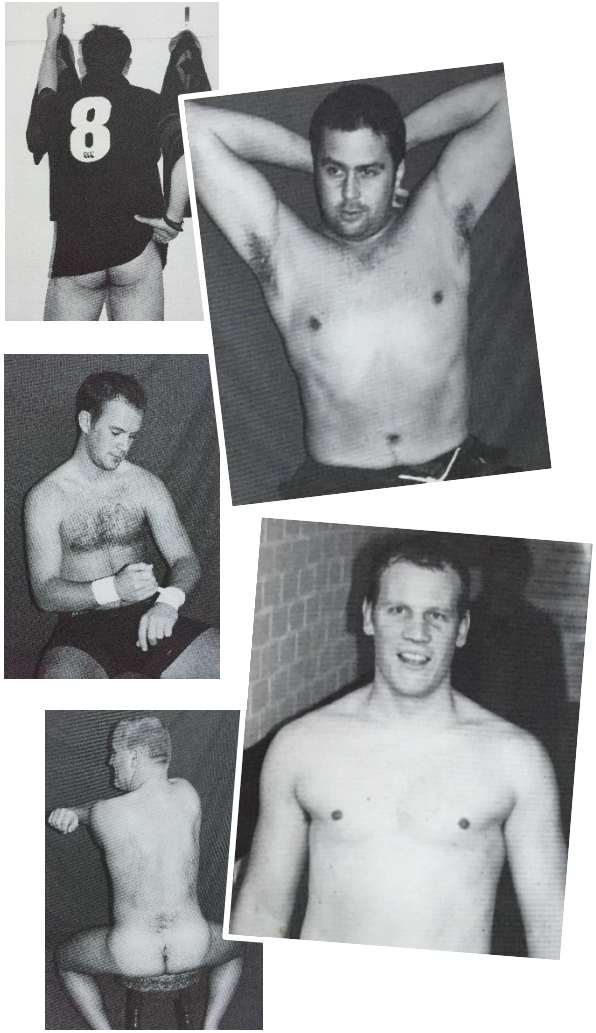
But with most Saturday night's that season spent partying late into the night at the club and then the Sports Bar in Woking, it is perhaps unsurprising one small thing in the production process got past the team.

"We actually sold quite a few and raised quite a bit of money for the club. My sister Jane organised the printing for free, so everything we sold was profit," added 44-year-old accountant Emmas, whose parents Dave and Margret and sister Sally remain club regulars.

"The funniest thing was that we spelt the word 'calendar' wrong on the front cover and no-one picked it up in production. Even my sister, who worked in publishing and was doing all the layout, missed it.

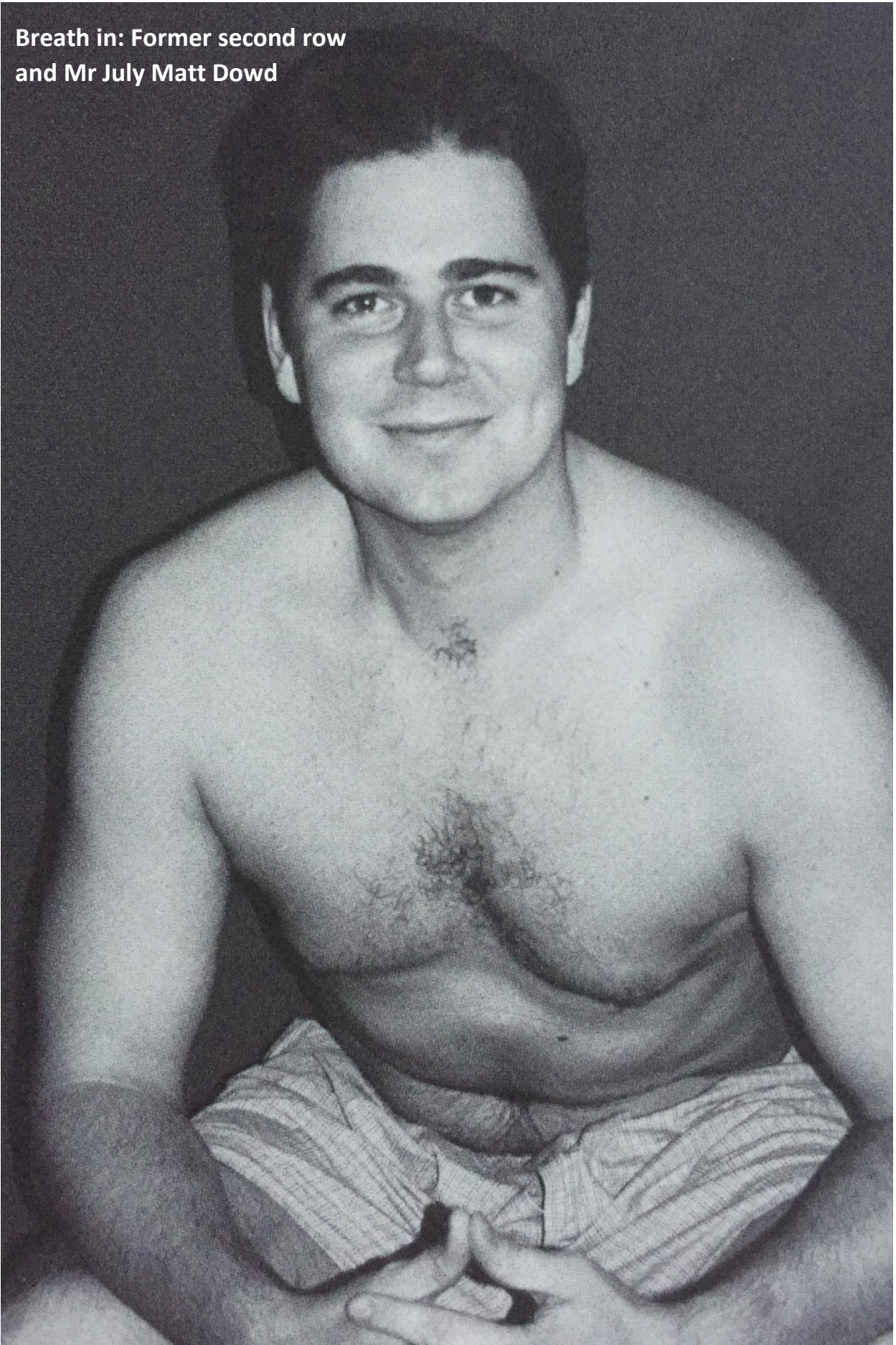
"My parents ripped the p*ss out of her for that. That is my favourite and lasting memory of the whole thing. It still makes me laugh."

**Roll call: (clockwise from top right)
Minis coach Hue Thomas; ex-club
captain Paul Hollingshead; Mr June
Gareth Owen; Mr October Will
Twydell; and, Mr January Stuart Amos**



Front row: (from left) Pete Quinn, Jason Quinn and Pete Ruffell were the pin-ups for May

Breath in: Former second row
and Mr July Matt Dowd





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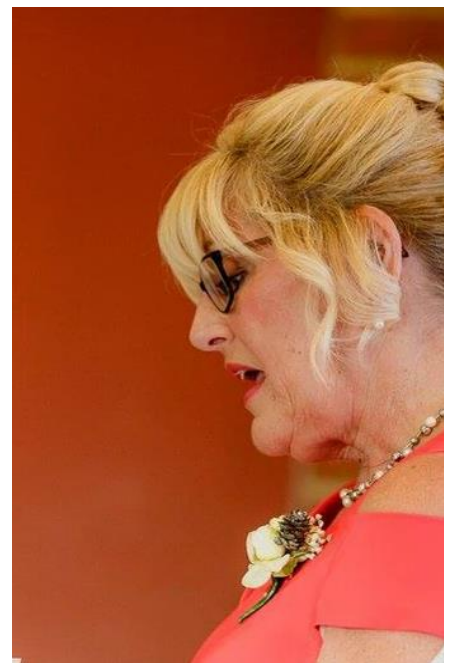
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Fill your boots: Entrepreneurs Maria Ryan and Adam McLaren hosting their McLaren Fine Foods stall at Ockley Market

Time for change

Setting up a hospitality and fine foods business on the eve of a national lockdown may seem like a brave thing to do, but for Maria Ryan and her partner Adam McLaren it has proved an inspired move.

The pair started McLaren Fine Foods in March 2020 just as Prime Minister Boris Johnson was about to close the country down as the coronavirus crisis first took hold.

As thousands of businesses in the hospitality and catering sector closed their doors and furloughed staff, Maria and Adam were taking steps to protect themselves from the inevitable economic down to come. Not willing to sit back

and let it happen, Adam, an award-winning former executive head chef at Brooklands Hotel with two AA rosettes to his name, dug deep into 20 years of experience and business contacts.

The aim was to deliver fresh, locally sourced produce and beautiful bakes directly to people across Surrey during the pandemic.

And – with a helping hand from the Elbridge community – from small beginnings McLaren Fine Foods has grown to tick that box.

“It was definitely a gamble to start a business and open a shop in the current climate,

“It was definitely a gamble to start a business and open a shop in the current climate.”

- Maria Ryan, McLaren Fine Foods

especially when the hospitality industry is struggling so much,” explains Ryan.

“We began our business with a view of helping our community at a time when a lot of people were not keen or able to get out to supermarkets.

“Also, we were worried we may be furloughed ourselves and that suppliers usually delivering to restaurants, hotels and schools were starting to slow right down and suffer due to the pandemic.

“So, we started to offer local delivery of fresh fruit and vegetable boxes, advertising on social media in local community groups, we became very popular, very quickly.

“We would get our deliveries in the early hours from our suppliers at Covent Garden Market, pack the boxes, then go out after work each day to make our deliveries.

“We were then able to add meat and dairy produce as we continued to grow. After a few weeks, we noticed that a lot of others were starting similar enterprises and decided we could expand our services.

“We continually adapt to suit the current demand- which does tend to change depending on the government announcements.”

From those small beginnings the business, one of Weybridge Vandals RFC’s sponsors for this season, has grown to occupy new premises in Church Road opening a new ‘city’ farm shop on October 24.

As lockdown 1.0 began to bite, McLaren quickly diversified from fresh fruit and veg, to cater for the little things including delivering hand-baked pastries, cakes, craft beers and locally produced gins and wine.

And they established and continue to host the West Byfleet Farmer’s Market in the car park of Our Lady Help of Christians Roman Catholic Church on each last Saturday of every month.

“Realising people were beginning to miss other things such as going out for treats and given Adam’s experience as a pastry chef, we decided to offer an afternoon tea delivery service,” Ryan adds.

“We began by taking bookings for Sundays alone, then as the demand increased, Adam decided to leave his job in London and work for us full time.

“We’ve delivered almost 4,500 afternoon teas to date and have received an overwhelming number of positive reviews and fantastic community support during this time.



Tasty treat: One of McLaren Fine Foods’ signature afternoon teas available for home delivery

“We love our community and have strong support for fellow small businesses, especially during the current crisis.

“Although the pandemic has brought a lot of hard times for many, we are proud to be one of the positive stories.

“We’re really proud of what we’ve achieved so far and hope to continue to grow.”

We’ve all been forced to adapt and with any luck McLaren Fine Foods can continue to flourish in 2021.

For more information, please visit mclarenfinefoods.com.



Plenty to offer: (clockwise from top right) Shoppers stock up on tasty treats ahead of Christmas at West Byfleet Farmer’s Market; some of Adam’s popular cinnamon buns; McLaren’s dry ageing maturation fridge for beef; and, shopkeeping novices Adam and Maria cut the tape on their new home in Church Road, Weybridge



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If Carlsberg did away days, this would be one of them



It is perhaps surprising how many of rugby's current National League and London Premier clubs have visited Brownacres for competitive fixtures over the past 20 years.

The likes of Richmond, Barnes, Sutton & Epsom, Guernsey and London Irish Wildgeese having all contested league points or cup competitions on Desborough Island in recent history – the latter finishing 19-3 losers on their last visit in 2009.

But perhaps the most high-profile club to have taken on Vandals most often during the modern era is Championship stalwarts Jersey Reds a fixture every first teamer wanted to be fit for.



Green, green grass: (clockwise from top) Jersey RFC's pristine first team pitch at St Peter's; Vandals' vets leap high at a lineout versus the hosts at the Veterans Super 10s Tournament on 2017; and, defeated Vandals pose for a photo with a victorious Leeds team after the Shield final in 2017



Thanks for the memories: (clockwise from top) A Vandals Owls team – captained by current president Kevin Keaney - reached the quarter-final of the Cup competition at the Jersey 10s in 2016; captain Matt Dowd, right, with Olly Sell, centre, and prop Phil Dempsen with the Shield runners-up trophy in 2017; the Vandals shield in the Jersey clubhouse; and, bottom, the 2017 Owls squad enjoying the post-match hospitality at Jersey’s St Peters home

The islanders, who lost only three of their 12 clashes with Vandals, were regular visitors and hosts between 1998 and 2005 – the year they romped to the London Division Three South West title.

With the RFU picking up the tab for flights and subsidising accommodation, it was the one away trip everyone was available for.

The Vandals never triumphed at Jersey’s St Peters home with their three wins coming at home, but came within minutes of ruining what proved to be a perfect winning season for the Reds as the hosts eventually edged a 27-20 thriller.

Weybridge are still fondly remembered on the island with current President Gareth ‘Chef’ Owen particularly prominent in the minds of club officials.

And until very recently, Vandals still sent a team of veterans to contest the Jersey Vets Super 10s



Tournament, which the club continues to host each year on the first weekend of October.

With that in mind, Jersey remains one of the premier away venues to visit outside of the top flight and international rugby.





Jolly boys: (clockwise from left) Neil 'Spud' Allen, Luke Goggin, Ben Allenby, Olly Sell and Stuart Amos soak up the seaside atmosphere ahead of the Jersey Vets 10s in 2017

If Carlsberg did rugby away days in Jersey, it might now look a little bit like this.....

Friday:

Take a morning flight to the island, head straight to the Atlantic Hotel to check-in before playing nine holes of golf at Les Ormes. Round off the day with dinner at the Oyster Box in St Brelade's Bay. Recommended dish: Plateau Royal. Excellent with a chilled bottle of Chablis.

Saturday:

Up early for breakfast and another nine-holes of golf at Les Ormes before taking a taxi to Clement Bay Café for a coffee and the start of a west coast walk to Corbiere Lighthouse.

This hike takes in the very best the island's west coast has to offer in terms of views and terrain - as well as Big Vern's Café and EL Tico Beach Cantina for a quick bite.

Depending on the time of year, you can stop to watch the locals ride the waves as you look out across the ocean.

By the time you reach Corbiere, you should still have time to pick your way through the streets and fields to St Peter – the home of Jersey Reds Rugby Club - for a 3pm kick-off.

Jersey have risen to the Championship ranks – rugby's second tier – since they regularly played Vandals in London Division Three South West.

Step into the clubhouse to see the Vandals shield displayed alongside memorabilia from all other visiting clubs to have visited the island over the years.



Atlantic air: View towards Corbiere lighthouse from Big Vern's Café on Jersey's west coast

After the clubhouse bar closes take a taxi back to the Atlantic to freshen up or simply head straight out for more post-match festivities at the Salty Dog Bistro in St Aubin village. Recommended dish: Black Bream Fillet with Crayfish & Crab Risotto and seared scallops.

Sunday:

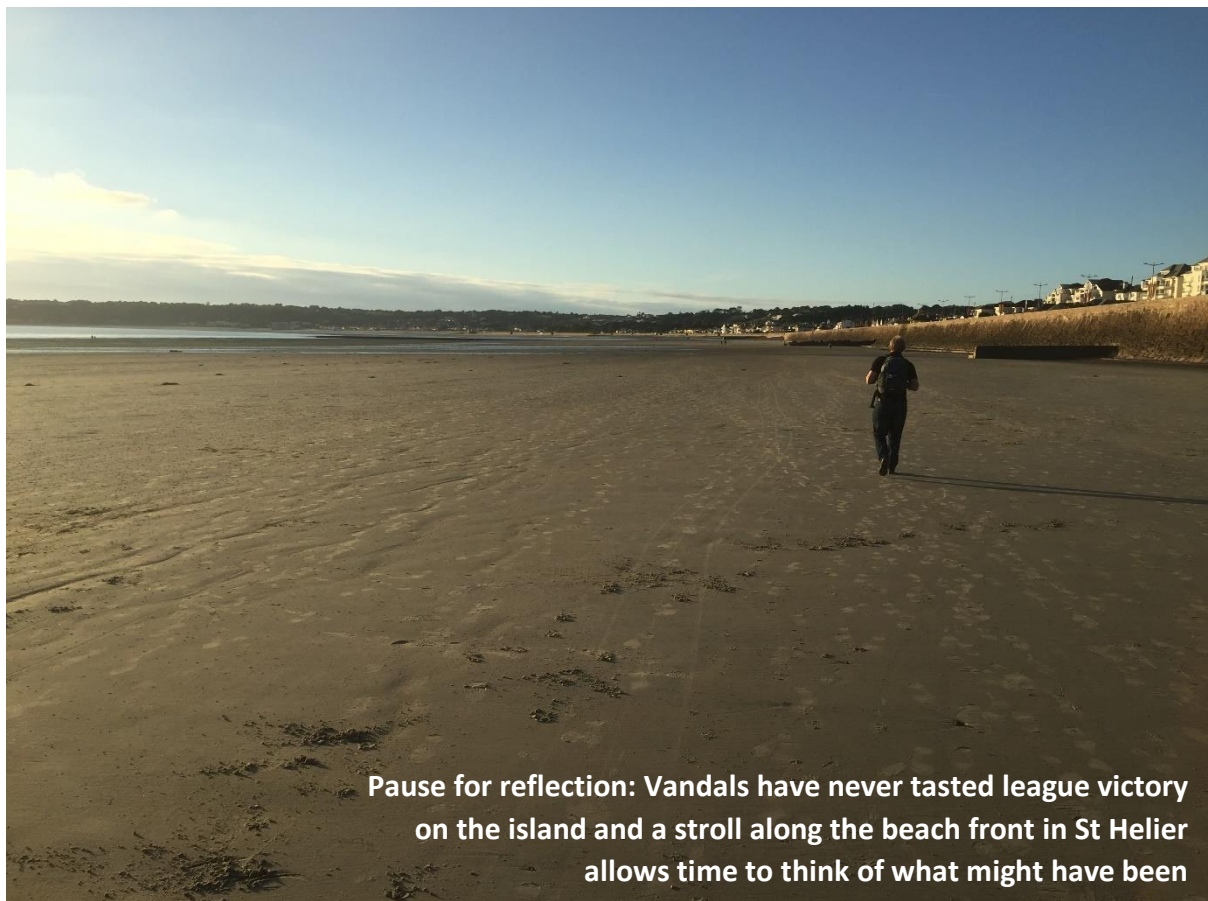
Hangover permitting, visit the historic Jersey War Tunnels before a long lunch at the Atlantic Hotel involving Roast Beef Sirloin followed by a mango & passion fruit cheesecake for dessert. Finish off by taking a drive into St Helier to pick up a few souvenirs – obligatory cuddly Jersey cow and cream fudge, obviously – before heading to the airport and home.

Accommodation:

A two-night stay at the four-star Atlantic Hotel – just 10 minutes from Jersey Reds – costs from £195 per person and includes car hire, matchday ticket and Sunday Lunch at the hotel’s Michelin-starred Ocean Restaurant.



**Room with a view:
Elizabeth Castle seen from
the beach in St Helier**



**Pause for reflection: Vandals have never tasted league victory
on the island and a stroll along the beach front in St Helier
allows time to think of what might have been**



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The day an England head coach inspired Vandals



Legends: Former Vandals captain Tony Couzens, far right, with kicking hero Cassian Bramham-Law, far left, and club greats prop Luke Goggin, centre left, and flanker Jon Cottam

Former England head coach Stuart Lancaster might have been widely derided after his team became the first sole host nation to exit a Rugby World Cup in the group stages in 2015, writes Stuart Amos.

But in Weybridge, at least, he will forever be the toast of the town.

The ex-Leeds flanker presided over a disastrous campaign that saw England eliminated thanks to costly Group A defeats to Wales and Australia.

Lancaster's men, who beat Fiji in the tournament's opening fixture, had been leading the Warren Gatland's Welsh team 25-18 with 10 minutes remaining at Twickenham stadium, only to crash 25-28 after a converted

Gareth Davies try and a Dan Biggar penalty for the visitors.

Their lacklustre showing in a 13-33 drubbing at the hands of the Wallabies proved to be the fatal blow to hopes of reaching the knockout stages.

A thumping 60-3 win over South American minnows Uruguay was to be the final act of Lancaster's doomed tenure in charge.

The rest, as they say, is history.

If only the 50-year-old Yorkshireman had looked back through his sent items and re-read a letter he had penned three years earlier, then things might have turned out very differently for him and his squad.

In April 2012, Weybridge Vandals were facing up to their own date with destiny as they prepared to entertain London Division Three South West champions-elect Old Alleynians at Brownacres.

Then head coach Nick Ridley's men had endured a difficult season and were staring down the barrel of relegation, needing a win on the final day to avoid the drop.

Crucially, perhaps, Old As had already secured the league title.

Club captain Paul Hollingshead, sensing something special may be required to salvage the club's season, sent a speculative email to Lancaster – via former Vandals full back Jack Short - asking if he could pen a few lines of inspiration for Vandals.

Much to his surprise, the current Leinster coach took time out of preparations for England's forthcoming tour to South Africa to respond, only days before Vandals' big match.

In his letter, Lancaster spoke of the need to 'be positive', 'believe you can win' and the importance of having a 'stronger motivation (internally)' to win than the opposition.

It had the effect Hollingshead had hoped for.

A stirring second half performance from Vandals' forwards, led by skipper Tony Couzens, set up Oxford Blue Cassian Bramham-Law to

England coach's wise words vital as Weybridge secure a crucial win in their survival fight Lancaster inspires the Vandals

Flashback: How the Surrey Comet reported Vandals' great escape

score late in the day to clinch a dramatic 27-20 triumph.

“What a brilliant and insightful thing for him to do,” Hollingshead told the Surrey Comet after the win ensured Vandals finished fourth from bottom above Old Freemans, Alton and Andover.

“He knows nothing about our situation, but he knew the time to write and got it spot on.”

Vandals' survival was not rubberstamped until promotion and relegation issues elsewhere in the London & South East leagues were settled.

But the victory was vital and provided proof Lancaster, who has since found success as a senior coach at Leinster, knew a little of what he was talking about

Lancaster's letter in full.

“I understand you have a key relegation battle this weekend and you needed a little support.

The most important thing in winning big games is the reason why – ie. which team has the stronger motivation (internally) to win – and it strikes me you guys should win hands down, if they have already been promoted and you need to win.

Secondly, to win big games you need to believe you can win. Self-belief and team belief are key.

Think positively, prepare properly 24 hours before the game and you never know what might happen.”



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Happy days: (clockwise from top) Rugby action returned to Brownacres in September as part of the Pitch Up to Rugby mixed touch tournament; wooden spoon winners, featuring Harry Reed, collect their trophy; and, the champions - including colts coach Nick Hardy - claim their title

Brief encounter



Rugby returned to Brownacres with a friendly mixed touch tournament on September 12, as part of the club's Pitch Up to Rugby weekend but, unfortunately, it didn't last all that long.

While the juniors recommenced Sunday training and the men's senior section played some 'competitive' fixtures under new RFU guidelines, the nation was back in full lockdown again by November.



Winning smile: Sara and Paul Hollingshead seemed to enjoy the day, as did all who took part, *left*

Plans for a limited 'league' competition to start in January - where clubs were placed in pools with teams of their standard in the local vicinity - were shelved, but at least some action took place.



**Breather: (clockwise from above)
Competitors take it easy during the Return
to Rugby touch tournament; the runners-
up take their prize from club president
Kevin Keaney, *far right*; and it was all
smiles as Stuart Gulliver, *left*, and James
Wellden, *right*, kick-off hostilities**





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Back our boys

Running back: Veteran Weybridge Vandals prop Wayne Mason, *above*, leads the charge during pre-season and the club's sponsorship team is working just as hard in the hunt for new backers to add more beef to the club's financial bone

In the most challenging year that our club has ever faced, we have been completely humbled by the level of support from both our members and sponsors. We have seen so many of you come forward to support us and without you we simply would not have survived.

However, the battle to survive continues, and as a club we want to come out of this pandemic even stronger than before.

We have exciting plans within the rugby section to improve our facilities, develop our Junior and Mini coaches and provide in-house professional physiotherapy treatments to all age groups.

To fund this "year on year" requires a greater income than we currently receive and so we are working tirelessly to continue to extend out support from local businesses who will see and understand the mutual benefits of becoming a proud sponsor of Weybridge Vandals RFC.

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The Cayman Islands Travel Guide



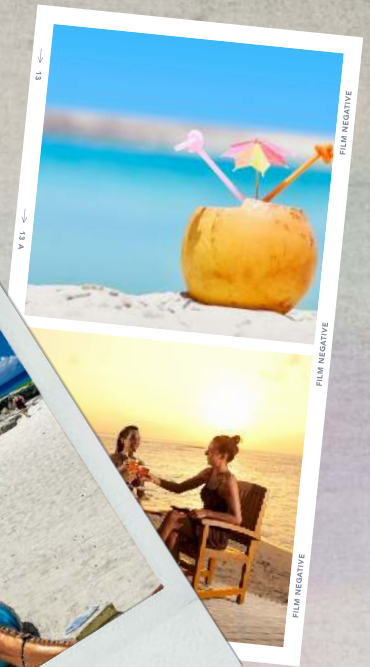
The Cayman Islands are three idyllic islands nestled in the warm turquoise waters of the Caribbean Sea. Each island offers a unique experience, united by a warm Caymanian welcome in a truly outstanding natural environment. The islands enjoy an average temperature of around 28°C, perfect for a spot of sunshine year-round.

The islands offer an array of quality accommodation from beachfront villas and dive lodges to five-star hotels, all of which are within easy access to the beautiful ocean.

Food is an important part of the Cayman Islands experience. Grand Cayman alone boasts in excess of two hundred restaurants serving local and international cuisine. Numerous restaurants can be found along the world-famous Seven Mile Beach with others dotted all over the island.



For a truly authentic experience, try the freshly caught fish and seafood and dine outdoors under the stars. Guests can tantalise their taste buds by visiting local eateries and world-renowned restaurants, each featuring speciality products while learning about the rich culture and history of this corner of the Caribbean.



As well as sampling the delicious local delicacies, there is a whole host of activities to get stuck into.

For relaxation, swimming and sunbathing head to Seven Mile Beach, a seemingly endless stretch of pristine white sand and palm trees. Alternatively, Rum Point is the perfect venue for cocktails, lazing in hammocks and generally soaking up the Caribbean lifestyle. A visit here is not complete without a delicious mudslide cocktail, rumoured to have been invented at the Wreck Bar back in the '50s.



Of course, the crystal clear waters surrounding the islands offer endless hours of entertainment including sailing, kayaking, jet skiing, kitesurfing and paddle boarding.

A mecca for divers and snorkellers, all three islands offer an extraordinary marine world where turtles and eagle rays share pristine coral reefs with fabulously colourful fish. There are hundreds of dive and snorkel sites suitable for every level from beginner upwards with many just a short swim away from the shore. Some of the better known sites include the Bloody Bay Wall, frequently listed amongst the best wall dives in the world, and Stingray City, a unique site where friendly wild stingrays congregate around a shallow sand bar in open waters, happily interacting with their two legged admirers.

Divers and marine life alike are drawn by the numerous wrecks including a 330-foot Russian Frigate, the Captain Keith Tibbetts, and the Kittiwake, an ex-USA Navy vessel submerged off Seven Mile Beach.



Above water, naturalists will love the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park where, thanks to the successful Blue Iguana Conservation Programme, the rare, indigenous, blue iguana can be seen roaming freely. For a taste of island heritage, a visit to Pedro St James, the birthplace of democracy, is a must.

A trip to the Cayman Islands is not complete without hopping over to the sister islands, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman. Getting to the islands is a mini adventure in itself as you fly in a 16-seat twin-Otter aircraft, sitting right behind the pilots. On rugged Cayman Brac you can explore eight miles of nature trails, with educational information on flora and fauna displayed on plaques along the way. There is even the option to have an energetic local tour guide to show you around free of charge. Definitely worth doing even if you are only there for a short visit.



Little Cayman, the smallest of the three islands, has a population of 197, and an abundance of rare birdlife. This is the perfect place to step away from the world and relax in hammocks under shady palm trees. There are several stylish resorts on Little Cayman, where traffic is minimal (cycling is the norm) and the iguana is given right of way.

Whether drawn by its history and heritage, wildlife or marine world, sandy bays and beach bars or the fabulous hotels and restaurants, visitors will discover that the Cayman Islands bring more than a splash of colour to even the most seasoned traveller's explorations.

For European visitors, British Airways offer four direct flights a week from London Heathrow to Grand Cayman. Alternatively, there are numerous same-day connections through Miami International Airport and various other US airport hubs.

**For more information see
www.visitcaymanislands.com
or call 020 7491 7771.**