

Followers' News

This edition includes an article on Dean Adamson. Looking at some of the names he played with include James Pritchard, Pat Tapley, Jake Sharp, Darryl Veenendaal, Charlie Clare, Paul Tupai, Josh Buggea and Mike Howard to name but a few.

We also have a contribution from our new Media Manager who seems to be getting well into the Blues Family.

Unfortunately the lack of take up for Rugby Tonight on the coach means we cannot run the coach to Rugby Tonight as we do not want to run a social event at a loss. The trip can still be made by rail. The cheapest option by rail being a £30 day advance return to London plus £0.75 admin. You are still welcome to attend.

The quiz might be a challenge so try it before you look up the answers on line. Answers published in next edition towards the end of April. Anyone wishing to submit an article please send to me at bedfordrugbyfollowers@gmail.com by 24th April 2020.

For those of you interested in the history of the Blues we have a great peek into Fred Turner who attended matches from the mid 1930's to 1997. Our thanks go to his daughter Patricia Parkinson.

Mel Grover

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We have already covered the following away grounds in previous issues:-

Issue 1 - Hartpury and Ealing Trailfinders

Issue 2 - Coventry and Yorkshire Carnegie

Issue 3 - Doncaster and Nottingham

Issue 4 - London Scottish and Cornish Pirates

Latest offering is in Issue 5 - Newcastle

I have now created a page under the membership tab which gives access to all previous issues. Click on the lowest pink box link on our website <https://www.bedfordrfa.org/>

Dean Adamson One of our longstanding players from 2014

Dean was born in Bedfordshire and it wasn't too long before he had a ball at his feet or in his hands, always wanting to play the ball. He first visited a rugby field aged 5, at Ampthill, with Mum and Dad on the touch line watching. Dad soon became a coach (much to his dislike). His early years showed he had decent pace and could catch a ball.

Off the field he had a wide group of friends and he'd often take his football goals from the garden to the end of the road and there'd be hours of fun playing football on the street. If they eventually got bored, they'd dress up and play Power Rangers!

At school he played every sport possible, but rugby, football and athletics were probably the games he excelled in the most. The weekend saw him playing football Saturday, rugby Sunday and swimming with his brother. Mum and dad often ended up travelling in different directions. The Ampthill rugby team included many of his school friends and they built up a strong squad through the age groups, having many close fought tussles with their nearest rivals Bedford Junior Blues.

Rugby took Dean to many places in the mini & youth days, Cirencester, Norwich, Westcliffe on Sea, and Stockport on the mini tours. The Gullivers tournaments in Nottingham, saw Dean and the Ampthill squad make 3 visits to the home of rugby, Twickenham in the Pre England v Barbarians tournament where the finals were played. 2 wins (including one versus Junior Blues) and a draw he never lost at Twickenham.

In his youth playing days, he and his Dad, toured to the Scottish Borders, Romania, Dublin and Barcelona. The latter tour (U17's) saw Dean's Mum attend her first rugby tour with a few other mums (probably the draw of Barcelona!). No stories from the tours (what goes on in a tour, stays on tour). His youth rugby saw him play for Bedfordshire County Squad and East Midlands.



Dean joined Bedford academy (at U18's level) and had 2 great years of development, playing many top squads, including Leicester. That team included a certain M Tuilagi who he was pretty large then too. His spell included a trip to the National U19's cup final which the Blues, containing a certain Ali Price, won 31 -15.

After the Blues Dean made his way back to Ampthill, to enter men's rugby, under the tuition of Paul Turner. This was a big step up, but he helped Ampthill progress two levels in the national leagues before returning to the Blues. At the same time, as playing senior rugby, Dean began a university degree at Nottingham, commuting to training and matches. What should have been a 3 year degree, ended up as a 5 year course, doing it part time, whilst focusing on his rugby. All worthwhile, he achieved a "first" in Real Estate.

His first match for the Blues was away against London Scottish in the 2014/15 season a game that also saw him bag his first championship try.

6 years on, mainly injury free, the 2019/20 season has proved a more challenging season; 2 hip operations and a shoulder operation saw him delay his start. He also missed a few more games through an ankle injury and subsequently a broken finger.

Outside rugby some of Dean's habits haven't changed since his youth: exercising his fingers on PlayStation - FIFA or Call Of Duty. If you could get a master's degree in this, he would probably get a first class honours! His culinary tastes have changed since he was young,

eating no veg and just chicken nuggets & chips and of course tomato ketchup. He is now eating (still with ketchup) all things healthy and has grown to enjoy a spot of cooking himself... putting cookbooks on his Christmas list!



Dean remains dedicated to the sport, on and off the pitch, Which has been tested during the first half of this season, managing an intensive rehab.

Mum and Dad remain extremely proud of his achievements on and off the pitch and have themselves become staunch Blues fans, after quickly feeling a part of the Blues family.

Mike Adamson

Ryan Robinson - Media Manager

Hello everyone,

I would like to start this article by formally introducing myself - my name is Ryan Robinson and I am the new Media Manager of Bedford Blues, having joined the club at the start of the year.

I have tried to introduce myself to as many of the loyal Bedford Blues fanbase as possible so my sincerest apologies if we have not crossed paths yet.

It's been a whirlwind six weeks since I made the move from South Wales to Bedford but fortunately the main point of note is the team's immeasurable upturn in form, they've picked up 18 points from the last six matches in a run that featured Huw Worthington's dramatic late try to see off Jersey Reds (I'm told that happens quite a lot at Goldington Road so fingers crossed for another one soon).

Having watched the squad in those six matches and every week in their meticulous training sessions, it still baffles me that the results weren't forthcoming for the squad in the early stages of the season because they leave everything out on the field time after time and play a scintillating brand of rugby.

When I first arrived, I was informed that I must, without fail, use the hashtag #BluesFamily in all my social media postings. All sports clubs have their branding, it was #OneClubOneCounty at Newport County AFC and #BringYourFire at Dragons Rugby (both of whom I worked for before moving here).

Social media branding is massively important, but I didn't realise how much the hashtag #BluesFamily actually resonated here at Goldington Road with the unique relationship between the supporters and the club. I hope that in my role, I can only re-enforce that into an even stronger bond.

It didn't take me long to work out how important the club was to the town and equally how important the supporters were to the squad. I have been fortunate enough already in my fledgling career to report on sell-out games at stadiums like Wembley, Rodney Parade and Kingsholm but nothing quite compared to the Goldington Road experience.

A wonderful atmosphere brought in my first home game against Hartpury and there was an equally wonderful performance; the first home victory of the season. The boys have made



it three from three so far at Goldington Road in 2020 and I know they're desperate to make it four against Doncaster Knights this coming Saturday.

I have had the privilege of travelling with the Followers to the last two away games against Cornish Pirates and Ealing Trailfinders; while the results weren't what we hoped, these trips have only gone to strengthen my admiration for the club and the #BluesFamily that I have spoken about throughout this article. I truly feel a part of the club. It's a running joke already in the office but I sincerely believe I 'bleed Blue' already.



It would be remiss of me to say that I wasn't daunted by the fact that I was making the arduous trek down to Penzance with the Followers, unfamiliar surroundings always make me nervous, especially when knowing it was a seven hour journey to the hotel!

However, from the moment I had spoken to Geoff and Margaret Appleton at the coach pick up point, I knew I had nothing to fear. The welcome I received from the fellow travellers was really appreciated and I instantly felt part of the #BluesFamily from moment one.

In spite of the result, I had an amazing weekend which included going to Redruth v Henley Hawks and getting to know fellow supporters of the club. A huge thanks to Martin Clark, Solveig Haywood and Lesley Cornish for particularly welcoming me into the group and ensuring I was fully integrated and introduced to everyone.

I'd like to think I made an impression on the people mentioned and didn't bore them too much, however the fact that Martin spelt my name incorrectly in the subsequent programme makes me think otherwise. Fortunately, part of my role at the club is to proofread the programme so that secret has never made it to print until now. How do you spell my name again, Martin?



That was me fully settled into the club then. I don't even feel like I particularly need to go back to South Wales to visit anyone, Bedford feels like home already.

Of course, my parents still come up and visit me every now and then, to the point where my mother asked if she could come along to the Coventry game and watch the boys in action and to see what club I had left home to work for.

Again, there was slight hesitation on my part because I knew I'd be working all day leading up to the game and even a few hours afterwards too with the match report and a GMS Match Card having to be issued within a certain timeframe after the final whistle.

Therefore, I was worried my mother would have to spend the day on her own and sit by herself in Goldington Road. Again, I was wrong. After a chat with Solveig, she went over to introduce herself and went out of her way to make sure my mother enjoyed what I still think is her first live rugby match (she never watched the Dragons that's for sure!)

After the game, she was invited to sit with the Followers in the Marquee while I conducted my post-match duties and she very much enjoyed meeting everyone and learning more about the

club. As we were walking back to my flat, her words of "you'll be alright here, it's a lovely club" showed she agreed with my decision to make the move to Bedford.

I know she's posted her thanks to everyone - and particularly Solveig - on social media already but I just wanted to reaffirm that here as well, the way she was treated and embraced by everyone was really appreciated by both of us and she can't wait to join you all again.

It's been an honour and a privilege to get to know everyone so far and I look forward to meeting even more of the Followers as my time at the club progresses. It's crucial for supporters to feel a real part of the club and if I can help with that then please feel free to stop me and have a chat, I don't bite!

There's only one more thing for me to say...

Come on you Blues!

Answers Newsletter 4	
Club	Ground
London Scottish/Richmond	Athletic Ground
Birmingham Moseley	Billesley Common
Coventry	Butts Park Arena
Doncaster Knights	Castle Park
Amphill	Dillingham Park
Sedgely Park	Park Lane
Yorkshire Carnegie	Headingley Rugby Stadium
Nottingham	Lady Bay Sports Ground
Cornish Pirates	Mennaye Field
Esher	Hersham
London Irish	Madejski Stadium
Jersey Reds	Saint Peter
Plymouth Albion	The Brickfields
Fylde	Woodlands Memorial Ground

**C'mon you
Blues!**

Coming up Soon

Away trips prices and times are on our website.

1. BT Rugby Tonight Wednesday 4th March 2020
2. Quiz Night Friday 6th March 2020
3. 8:00pm Fri 13th Mar 20 Newcastle Falcons v Bedford
4. 3:00pm Sat 21st Mar 2020 Bedford Blues v Nottingham
5. 3:00pm Sat 28th Mar 2020 Amphill v Bedford Blues
6. 3:00pm Sat 4th Apr 2020 Bedford Blues v London Scottish
7. 3:00pm Sat 11th Apr 2020 Hartpury v Bedford Blues
8. 3:00pm Sat 25th Apr 2020 Bedford Blues v Cornish Pirates

QUIZ PAGE General rugby knowledge - this could be a challenge without going on line!

1. The 1971 British Lions are the only Lions side to have won a Test series in New Zealand. Can you name the captain and coach?
2. England's Richard Cockerill's had a famous fierce rivalry with which New Zealand hooker?
3. The Italian Guinness Pro12 rugby union team 'Zebra' is based in which city?
4. Which country did Wales have 12 consecutive losses to between 1983 and 1993?
5. Which nation denied England a Grand Slam in the final weekend of the 2000 tournament?
6. Who was the head coach of Ireland in the inaugural 2000 Six Nations?
7. What caused some games in 2001 to be postponed until the Autumn?
8. Which player got criticism for his 'swallow dives' in 2011?
9. Which 'first' took place in the 2009 match between France and Wales?
10. Which player's father was an unlikely pitch invader in the 2013 France versus Wales match?
11. Which team won their first Grand Slam since 1948 at the Millennium Stadium in 2009?
12. Which stadium became the home of Irish rugby when Lansdowne Road was being redeveloped in 2007?
13. Who became the first ever Scottish player sent off in an International Championship match in 2006?
14. In 2007, which team made a sensational start, scoring three tries in the first six minutes, in a big win against Scotland?
15. As of 2016, which flanker was the last player to score a try for the Lions against New Zealand?
16. South African sides the Toyota Cheetahs and Southern Kings are joining the Guinness PRO12, but which two cities are these teams based in?
17. For which New Zealand rugby province did Warren Gatland play? And how many new Zealand caps did he win?
18. In 2016, Elliot Daly became only the second ever England player to get sent off at Twickenham; who was the first (hint: it was 2005)? And which team were England playing?
19. The first time Wales ever played a capped international match in any colour other than red was in the 1987 World Cup; what colour did they play in and which team did they play?
20. In 2011, Manu Tuilagi was fined £3000 by the England team for jumping into which harbour?
21. Which pair of brothers were the first since Rory and Tony Underwood to play together for England?
22. Only two players with international careers which began in the 1980s went on to win over 100 international caps; can you name both?
23. The 2019 Rugby World Cup final was held in which Japanese city?
24. Two British players have won The World Rugby Junior Player of the Year in the last 8 years, name both?

GUIDE TO AWAY GROUNDS - Newcastle Falcons, Kingston Park

Fri 13th Mar 2020 8:00pm Newcastle Falcons v. Bedford Blues

HISTORY

The Newcastle Falcons were formed in 1877, nine years before the Bedford Blues.

A group of old boys from Durham School met in a private house in Gosforth to discuss the formation of a new rugby club in the area and the Gosforth Football Club was born. Maintaining that connection with Durham School, Gosforth played in the school's colours of green and white hoops and continued to do so right through until the 1990s. In 1882, Gosforth merged with another local club, Northumberland, and assumed their name until changing back in 1887.

A nomadic side in the early years playing at a host of homes right up until the middle of the 20th century, playing wherever and whenever they could - with grounds at various stages including Ashburton Meadows, South Northumberland Cricket Ground and Regent Road.

Gosforth lost massive numbers during the First World War but the club reformed in 1919 despite these tragic deaths, sharing the Northumberland County Ground with traditional rivals, Northern.

Rugby again halted for the Second World War and it was only the efforts of some former officials in setting the club up again which stopped it from disappearing altogether. An amazing fundraising effort eventually saw a total of £10,000 gathered to help the club's efforts to purchase a ground of its own, and in 1951 they bought land which eventually become their home.

In the 1971/2 season the club was captained by Jack Rowell, who would later go on to coach Gosforth, Bath and England successfully. In 1989 Gosforth sold their North Road Ground for £1.7million to a housing developer and set about purchasing the Newcastle Chronicle and Journal sports ground at Kingston Park for only £55,000.

The club spent a season playing at Percy Park RFC while work was completed on Kingston Park, and in 1990 they moved into their new home, also under a new name - Newcastle Gosforth.

Up-and-down results and financial problems beset the club, and in September 1995 it was to undergo another major change when Newcastle United Football Club chairman Sir John Hall realised his long-held dream of establishing a Newcastle Sporting Club, encompassing rugby union.

Hall's new Sporting Club held 76 per cent of the shares in the club, while the other 24 per cent was held by the Newcastle Gosforth members. The '24 per centers' as they are known, continue to provide valuable support to the club.

The 1996/7 season would be the club's first as Newcastle Falcons, while also marking a change of home colours to black and white. That season saw the team rise through the second tier of English club rugby and clinch promotion to the Premiership.

They were relegated from the Premiership in the summer of 2012 they bounced back straightaway despite being taken all the way by Bedford Blues in the 2013 RFU Championship final.

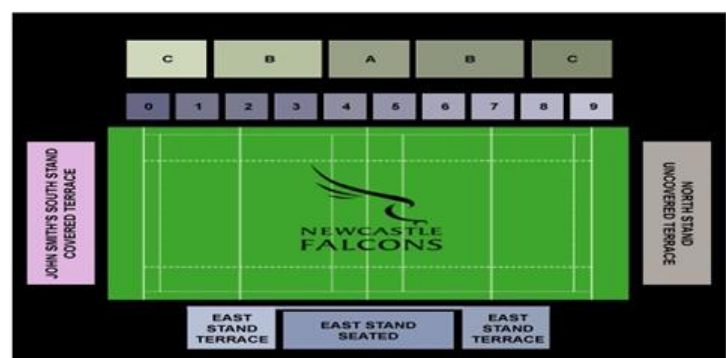
Match Day at "KINGSTON PARK"

West Stand

This is the biggest stand along the full length of the pitch, all seating and covered, although right at the front you may get damp on a particularly wet & windy day. The tickets vary in price according to three zones: Most expensive category A are around the half way line, category B centres around the 22, economy class category C is at either end.

There is a bar underneath that until recently was the longest bar in England, and two food outlets serving a range of things to keep you going from hot pork sarnies to the usual burgers & chips, and possibly some healthy stuff too. After most games there is entertainment in the bar including presentations to players and other amusements.

KINGSTON PARK MAP



The South Stand

This is all tiered terracing behind the posts with the luxury of a roof, and is the noisiest stand by far where both locals and visitors can try to shout the roof off. If you don't mind standing then this is the best place to be, especially for visiting supporters from other clubs as you can congregate easily at the front from where it is easy for somebody to nip to the bar and get the pints in. There is a large bar underneath.



The East Stand



This is the original clubhouse with a small amount of seating in the centre and pitch-side terracing either side. Built in 1990 it houses the changing rooms and club offices, ticket office and shop, and the Hiding Place bar which is open only on match days. There is also a bar downstairs which on match days is exclusively for season ticket holders. The terracing allows access right up to the pitch, but be warned that your view could be obstructed by players or officials who are based on the touchline here. There is a full range of beverages, light

bites, and a view of the pitch. Situated on the first floor of the East Stand, adjacent to the Tap & Tackle, is the 1877 Bar.

The Hiding Place bar is a good place to meet up after the game if you fancy a pint & a natter away from the post-match entertainment.



The North Stand



Uncovered terracing behind the posts, these would be the cheap seats if only there were some seats. There are however some devotees, they even have their own song:

We are the north stand, the dirty north stand

Nobody loves us, and we don't care

We have no roof and, we have no toilets

But we follow the Falcons everywhere.

Travelling to Kingston Park.

Obviously the best way to travel is with the Followers on a luxury coach enjoying a few cold bevies on the way. Contact the Followers (Margaret Appleton) ASAP if you want to travel with us.

But if you do travel independently the address is:-

Kingston Park Stadium, Brunton Road. Kenton Bank Foot, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE13 8AF

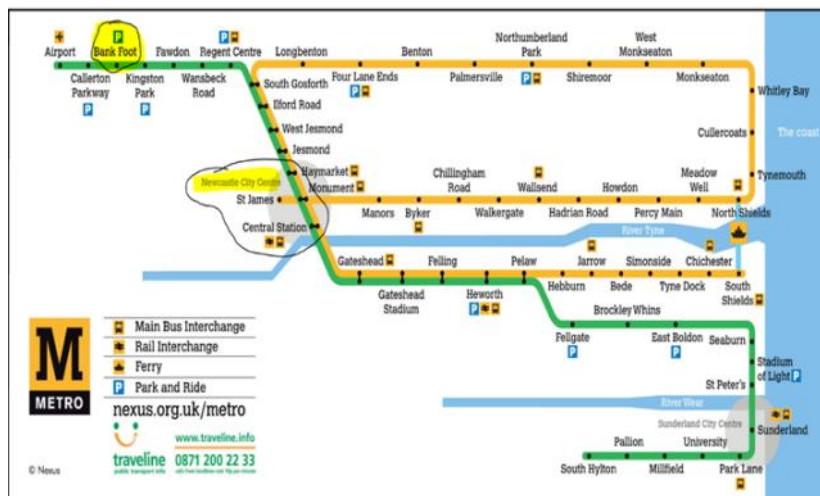
The ground is five miles from Newcastle city centre but easy to get to the City as it is close to both Kingston Park and Bank Foot Metro stations.

Buying tickets

Once you have decided where you want to stand or sit, you can get your tickets by phoning the Ticket Hotline 0871 226 6060 or online <http://www.newcastlefalcons.co.uk/tickets/info>



Membership and Outings
Margaret Appleton
01234 354708



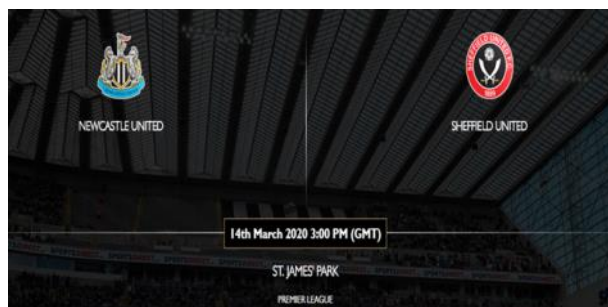
Metro

If you are travelling into the City before or after the game worth noting that Newcastle has a great light-rail system known as the Tyne and Wear Metro. Rather confusingly however, the closest station to the ground is not Kingston Park, but the next station on the line towards the airport - **Bank Foot** in Zone 2 of the system. Upon exiting the station turn right, head past (or via!) the Twin Farms pub, take a right then left and you'll be on the road to the stadium.

PUBS NEAR KINGSTON PARK

Twin Farms - is very traditional inside with stone walls and floors and wooden furniture. The food is lovely and the menu is quite varied and is reasonably priced at around £7 or £8 for a main course. Drinks are reasonable and they sell a variety of beers. It's a cosy place, perfect for a pre-rugby pint. Often very popular with away supporters as it's about 10-minute walk from the stadium.

Back in town, Newcastle has every type of bar you could imagine, from real ale pubs to cocktail bars to massive clubs.



What to Do Saturday

A Weekend of Geordie Sport

Why not catch the Magpies take on the Blades at St James' Park on Saturday.

PADDY FEST 2020 "St Patricks Day Festival" / TIMES SQUARE NEWCASTLE

The last TWO years saw over 4000 people trek down to Times Square Newcastle for an afternoon or an evening of proper Irish craic inside huge Oktoberfest style tent, where everyone could watch the final day of the 'Six Nations Rugby' and dance on the benches to live Irish bands.

FEATURING FINAL DAY OF SIX NATIONS RUGBY LIVE ON TWO HUGE SCREENS !!

The last two years sold out in advance and pay on the door is £12-£15 so grab your super cheap early bird tickets Huge Oktoberfest style beer tent!- Fully Irish fun-filled decor!- Live Six Nations Rugby on huge LED screen!- Supersized 30m Guinness & beer bar!- Live traditional & modern Irish bands throughout! - Live DJs playing into the night! - 1000s of free Irish & Guinness memorabilia & giveaways!- Craft Ales, independent street food & coffee vendors!- Entertainers throughout the day and night- Traditional 'Ulster fry' breakfasts available!



Plastic Pitches

As Bedford Blues prepare for yet another match on a plastic surface at Kingston Park, it reignites the question, are they good for the game.

Almost exactly a year ago Northampton Saints scrum-half Alex Mitchell posted a gruesome image of bad grazes he sustained playing on an artificial pitch in the last round of Gallagher Premiership action. Several team-mates came out in support, with images of their own, including Fraser Dingwall, Jamie Gibson and former Saint James Wilson.



But there are those who believe that artificial turf is a cost-effective way of ensuring a ground is playable more often and that offers a durable solution for clubs who want to offer a field to their community regularly. The playing surface at Newcastle and that at Saracens is from SIS Pitches. These were installed to give a surface that would perform consistently throughout the entire season; traction, shock absorption and head impact criterion will be the same all year, whatever the weather. The increased playing hours mean teams are able to maximise the use of their facility, both for training and in matches. Also the level of specialist maintenance is nowhere near the same as required for maintaining perfect natural grass.

SIS don't believe artificial pitches cause a higher rate of injury. A 2016-17 study by the RFU, Premiership Rugby and RPA noted that when combining data from four seasons, neither injury incidence nor severity differ between artificial and natural surfaces. But risk will keep being monitored. This opinion is not shared. Gloucester second row Ed Slater commented last year that:

“At the top level I feel artificial pitches are a hindrance. I can see the benefit in lower leagues, particularly during bad weather, but they don't train or play on them at the same intensity. My main concern is how stiff the body feels after playing on an artificial pitch. I feel aches in my hips and back a lot more than if I've played on grass. It's an indicator to me there's more stress on the body. I've spoken to props whose objective on a plastic pitch is to minimise foot movement as there's not as much give. Players are changing their game to minimise the risk of injury.”

I understand the business advantages of 4G pitches, but from a performance point of view it feels inconsistent. You go from good grass surfaces at Exeter or Northampton, to 4G at Saracens, which is slightly different to the 4G at Worcester. We need to be more consistent. Right now, the surfaces are so different, it may affect the standard of rugby”.

When Munster laid there plastic pitch, Jonny Watersson in the Irish Times wrote:

“Munster's first match on the surface arrived two months after Scarlets backrow John Barclay ruptured an Achilles' tendon at Scotstoun, and fullback Johnny McNicholl called for artificial pitches to be outlawed. The following day Wasps flanker Jack Willis, who had just been called into the England squad, ruptured ligaments in his right knee on Saracens' artificial pitch.”

He went on to say:

“Joe Tomane, Ciaran Frawley and Will Connors all picked up injuries” also “The injuries may be perceived to be part of the game of rugby, tough luck and coincidental. But the most recent Premiership study bears out the belief that plastic pitches are more dangerous and cause more injuries than grass. It also begs the question why, from a player-welfare perspective, are they becoming more rather than less common.”

Jonny went on to quote some injury statistics for the previous season:

“The RFU crunched the numbers on grass and synthetic pitches in Premiership rugby, and came up with a

report after the 2016-17 season. It said that for that season 608 injuries were recorded on grass, 170 on artificial surfaces. With just three pitches the exposure to plastic was less, but returned injury rates of 129.1 per 1,000 hours compared to the grass rate of 89.6 per 1,000 hours, the total hours representing 25 matches. The average severity for match injuries on grass was 32 days, compared with 37 days for artificial turf. As stated in the official report: "The overall burden of injuries on natural grass was 2,481 per 1,000 days compared with 4,740 per 1,000 days on artificial turf, a staggering difference."

It was stipulated that 2016-17 was the first season where the incidence and burden of injury on artificial turf was higher than on natural grass. Enough, though, to take a pause on what direction player welfare is actually moving.

Writing in the Telegraph in May 2019, Daniel Schofield reported that:

"The Rugby Players' Association is demanding a halt to the construction of artificial grass pitches at Premiership level after mounting concern over the injury risk posed by plastic surfaces. There are three AGPs in the Gallagher Premiership at Saracens' Allianz Park, Worcester Warriors' Sixways and Newcastle Falcons' Kingston Park stadiums. Data from the past five seasons compiled in the Rugby Football Union's Professional Rugby Injury Surveillance Project (PRISP) shows that it takes 39 days to recover from an injury sustained on an AGP versus 30 days on grass. Lower limb injuries, including toe, foot and hamstring, are most prevalent on AGPs."

That has reinforced the widespread belief that AGPs are dangerous. Players have long argued that studs are more liable to be caught in motion in the harder surfaces/ Wasps flanker Jack Willis and Bath centre Jonathan Joseph suffered long-term injuries in such a manner playing at Allianz Park in 2018-19.

September last year in a game at Allianz Park Sale Sharks may have come away with an impressive 36-17 victory over Saracens on Saturday, but that did not stop Allianz Park taking another victim. Sale's Ben Curry suffered grazes down his leg from the 4G pitch, something that a number of other players have experienced in the past when playing on the artificial pitches of Saracens and other clubs like the Glasgow Warriors. Curry shared the photo on Twitter, also tagging the Rugby Players Association in the post, possibly in an attempt to raise more awareness of the injuries that are sustained on the surface.



Former England captain Dylan Hartley was forced to retire due to an injury sustained on a plastic pitch.

Hartley said he would like to ban playing professional rugby on artificial pitches, having injured his knee on Worcester's artificial grass in December. "I don't agree with them," he said. "I'd played the fortnight before and I'd tweaked my knee in a game, then I played on an artificial pitch the following week and probably playing on an injury didn't help. If there's a platform to show my support for getting rid of artificial pitches, it's here. It might be suited to under-10s or under-12s but from a personal point of view I don't like them."

Anyone who reads Planer Rugby will know that Jonny Nic can be a little controversial. In a column 18 months ago he could see the economic sense but also argued against these pitches. He wrote:

"Now, if you've ever even just walked on a 4G pitch, you'll know it makes a great putting green. It is ideal for Crazy Golf and Crown Green bowls too. They're flat and firm and smooth. When dry, you could probably play a decent game of snooker on there. They're hard-wearing, long-lasting and don't get chewed up in wet weather. Economically, they make perfect sense. Of course they do."

But I'll tell you one thing you really don't want to do on them. Play rugby.

Why? Because it sodding well knacks, that's why. Whereas players used to plough headfirst into mud and grass which would absorb the impact, they bounce off the 4G carpet."

He went on to say:

"You may as well play on tarmac. Indeed, tarmac would probably be a little more yielding, especially if softened with a little summer sun. When I was a boy, I used to play football in the street (by that fact alone you can tell how many years ago it was!) and as a goalkeeper, I would regularly dive on the concrete road and suffered some terribly bruised, scabby knees as a result. You'd take all the skin off your elbows and palms of your hands too.

Now, if you look at the photos of the Scarlets players after playing on the Warriors pitch on Friday, they're exactly like the ones I used to get, except these are 16-stone man mountains of meat and when they go down, they go down hard. It's shocking really. Rugby is physically challenging enough in the battles between players. We don't need to make it even more arduous by playing it on legalised hardboard. Rugby is supposed to be fun, not a contest defined by who gets the least injuries from actually playing it.

Coach Wayne Pivac has called the injuries his players suffered after Friday's game as "very bad". His players had a litany of badly grazed knees, along with blisters and sores. Now, we're not talking about a little carpet burn here, these were massive burns the size of your hand on the knees, backside, elbows and legs of some players. Those don't heal quickly.

Players have talked about bed sheets sticking to the weeping sores for days afterwards, and that's just not acceptable.

OK you might pick up an injury in the course of tackling someone, but getting one just from the surface itself, is insane."

Teams have to change their preparation schedules after playing on plastic due to pitch-based injuries they pick up. That's not right and it's not fair. It must be very intimidating knowing you're going out there and are pretty much guaranteed to get hurt.

Rugby is hard enough physically these days without having half the skin on your knees and shins and elbow stripped off, getting blisters on your feet, not to mention to increased joint pain many report because the impact of running on a hard surface is so much harder.

While the Rugby Players' Association insists most players would rather play on grass, in an interview earlier this year, Damian Hopley, RPA boss, voiced common sense about injury fears linked to artificial turf.

'For the first time this year, the Injury Surveillance report has come out saying that injuries last longer on artificial pitches, lasting nine days longer on average,' he said. 'Of all the pitches, Newcastle is the one which is liked the most. When you think that before there was a bog at Kingston Park in December - a pitch that was really difficult to play on - Newcastle comes out of it well. But generally, the survey will show that most of our players are not happy with artificial pitches. We've talked about whether there should be just one surface used across the Premiership.'

He points to the hybrid turf already in existence at Sandy Park, Welford Road, Pennyhill Park Hotel (where the England team train), Twickenham, Murrayfield, the Millenium Stadium and Aviva Stadium as a good example, but then admits the cost is prohibitive to most clubs, even given the cash rich environment of the top table teams.

Cash always comes into it in the end.

Martin Clark with thanks to Chris Ashworth.

Members forum/email contributions

My Blues Memorabilia Box

I read the excellent Rugby Followers Newsletter and I was inspired to rediscover my Bedford rugby storage boxes in my loft.

It was a revelation, the volume of historical programmes, newspaper cuttings and season tickets I inherited from my dad **Fred Turner**.

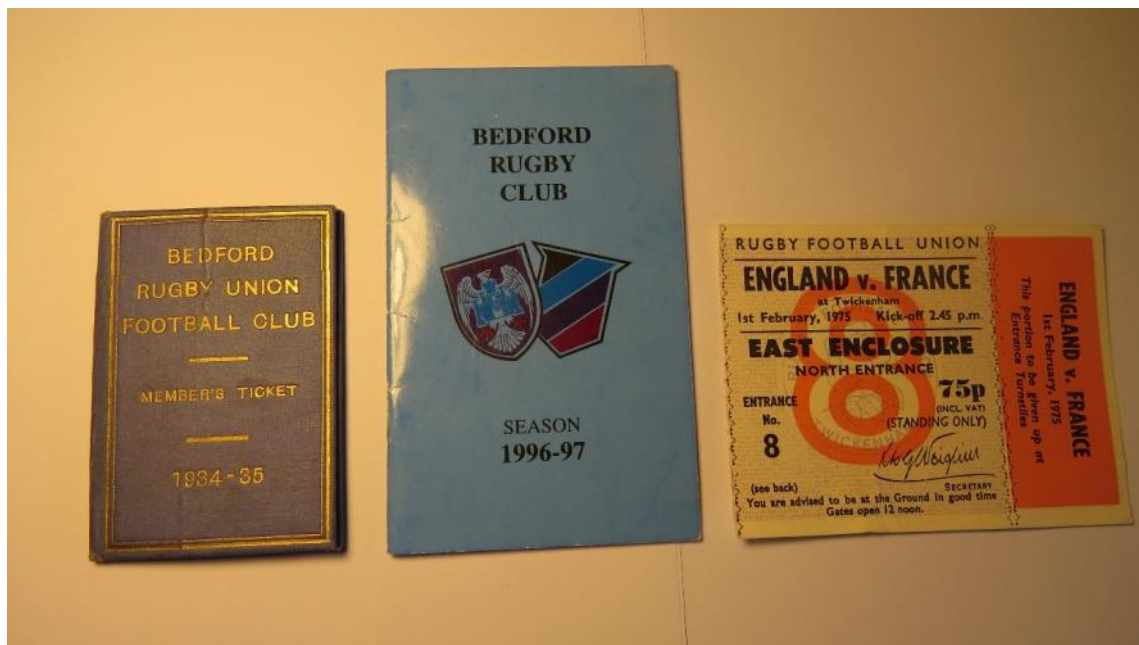
My dad was introduced to Bedford rugby club by a colleague who worked at W H Allens Engineering Works. His friends could never understand why he did not support "The Eagles"; the local successful football team.

Being a Rugby Follower enhanced his entire adult life. He was an ardent supporter throughout all of the ups and downs of the club. Come rain or shine he would be found standing on the halfway line opposite the stand. He always arrived early enough to ensure he had his favourite spot. Although he was a vice president he chose not to sit in the stand, apart from the last two years at the age of 89.

He only missed a handful of home fixtures and travelled with the Followers to most of the away matches organised by Ted Keep.

Encouraged by my dad I was introduced to rugby in my teenage years and eventually recruited into a tea ladies team ably led by Margaret Saunders. This ended when Frank Warren took over the club! My interest has continued all my adult life and my husband and I have our seats in the stand.

Delving into my storage box I discovered all of my dad's season tickets from 1934/35 to 1996/97 excluding the war years. The last match he attended was 7th May 1997 against Bristol.



There were numerous programmes for significant matches, first one dated 1928, when Bedford played Llanelli priced one old penny in old money when you had 240 to the pound. Another interesting programme was a memorial ceremony in Remembrance of Bedford rugby players lost in the war on the 29th September 1945. Bedford School versus the Wanderers

and Bedford versus Richmond-cum-Blackheath. One other of interest was All Blacks versus a Midland Counties 15 1963/64 tour. Numerous copies of Bedford R U F C newsletter 'Blueprint' introduced in 1989.

Searching through old newspaper cuttings just a taste of the material.

'Bedford Record' December 1935, Four Bedford players in English trials.

'Green un' (the sports newspaper) on November 1938 outstanding result Bedford beat Coventry.

'News of the World' 1959 "Young Budge won't give em an inch!"

A few extra snippets I found a ticket dated 1st February 1975 at Twickenham 'England versus France standing only 75p'. On one occasion my dad cycled to Northampton on a brand new Raleigh bike, stood it up outside, unlocked, watched the match and then cycled back! When the 100 year history book was written my dad contributed many old newspaper cuttings for perusal and information. On Saturday evenings he would cycle to St Johns Street to buy a 'Green un' newspaper to read the report, having already watched the match and read the programme. He often talked about many of the early players but his idol was Budge Rogers. Although Dad never played rugby, he often predicted young players that played at Goldington Road would play for England one day and he was right on many occasions.

The highlight of my dad being a 'Blues' Supporter was in 1975 with Bedford winning the Knockout Cup at Twickenham and attending the 1986 Centenary dinner.

Thank you Rugby Followers for giving my dad the opportunity to travel to so many rugby grounds and giving him so much enjoyment.

Patricia Parkinson

Members Forum

We would like to include articles submitted by members on this page. Please send any contributions by email to:- bedfordrugbyfollowers@gmail.com
We reserve the right to edit any contribution to make it suitable for publication.

The Followers aim to support and assist Bedford Rugby in various ways as determined by the Committee and by proposals carried at an AGM.

- We run coaches to mainland away games to provide support unequalled in our division.
- We run a Jackpot at home games to provide funds for the club and as cash prizes.
- We assist with ground maintenance each summer and support when necessary to clear snow and the debris left behind after our fireworks displays.
- We organise social events and help promote events held by the club.

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