



RAMPAGES (4) 2021



Well, a Happy New Year to you all and thank you for your emails telling me you are enjoying reviving past memories of your times at our beloved Harlow Rugby Club.

These reports come in from far and wide and the opener is from Mark Leppard who now lives and works in the United Arab Emirates. "Leppy" and his crowd were a great bunch of lads that Cliff and I had the pleasure of coaching 30 years ago!!!

I now feel really old!!!

Mark Leppard

"It's not what you can give to rugby, but what rugby can give to you". This massive adaption of JFK's inaugural speech seemed fitting as I gave some thought in my fifty first year about my rugby memories and to be more precise, what walking through Harlow Rugby Club's doors at Rams Gorse over 40 years ago meant to me.

I was immediately made to feel welcome by everyone, particularly, what at the time seemed a giant, in Steve Harrison with his ginger beard. It's all a bit of a blur but I remember being whisked off to Fairburn House to play in a Minis tournament. I broke my finger but, in those days, rather than scans, medical checks etc I was given ½ a bitter shandy by Iain Oastler and a crepe bandage wider than my whole hand, with a wooden lolly stick placed between my broken finger and another one. I actually think Iain picked the lolly stick off the floor as there was no such thing as a first aid box.

This Sunday morning experience could have frightened me away but instead I was hooked. Perhaps it was drinking a shandy as a 10-year-old!

Like so many of us who may read this, I moved through the ranks of U11 through to U17. For the 'Under' category it was meant to end at U16 but Chris Locke, in his usual determined style created the U17 category as many couldn't get game time in the jump to the Colts, who were at the time a real jewel in the Harlow crown with players like Peter Keeling, Alan and Jon Price, Reggie Crafton, David Hurley and so many more.

I think the highlight for me in the U17 team was travelling to London to play London Welsh. I started my rugby there with my cousin Kevin playing for them, well before joining Harlow. Oh, what a player Kevin was. He sadly passed away in 2020. At the young age of 51.

Harlow, as so often massive underdogs, we were supposedly in for a royal hiding (according to Kevin!). Chris Locke in his usual manner had 10 subs. As Jon Locke mentioned, you could never say 'No' to Chris, but equally Chris could never say 'No' to giving someone a game.

We were on top at half time. Great forward play, brave running and rucking in the backs and the majestic kicking of Darren Harrison. Half time arrived and Chris made 10 changes. Jon nearly blew a head gasket as he is a serial winner, but Chris was all about lads experiencing the game.



2nd half and we were really up against it but we won!

The funniest part was Adam Smith who worked in an abattoir at the time decided to bring a ram's head, which he stuck on one of the changing room clothes pegs as a memory for London Welsh. I'll never forget us all cracking up all the way home from Old Deer Park.

I have so many wonderful memories. Ray Ball encouraging Netteswell lads to join Harlow, tours with Colts to Blackpool and Weston Super Mare, my first 1st XV game v North Walsham (Simon Cooke was skipper I think) and the brilliant trip home via Norwich, Cambridge and Highwire, being in the Eastern Counties Cup winning squad and finishing my playing in the Vets winning the Malden Vets tournament with those very lads I started playing rugby with.

I am still friends with many from those days. I have played for a team in Argentina, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Qatar and gained international honours with the Arabian Gulf, but Harlow is still my club and will always be. It has a unique way of pulling you in and never letting you go.

Thank you to all those past and present who have given me such wonderful memories, experiences and lifelong friendships.

Mark Leppard

I was delighted to receive quite unexpectedly memoirs from Keith Clarke (Clarkie) who must be one of the players to hold the greatest number of appearances in a Harlow RFC shirt.

Keith Clarke

A few stories from me. I am now living in Sawtry, North Cambs.

I played for the Club for 26 seasons having never played rugby at school. I started in the 4th team and in about two years, I got my first team call up against Kings College Hospital, South London. On getting to the Clubhouse early, the rest of the team arrived except John, the scrum half who was to meet us there.

I put my kit in the car and at the last moment went to the toilet. On coming out I found everyone had left leaving me stranded. I waited around for a few minutes when CJ Porcher arrived to leave something at the Club. I told him my predicament and he told me I was in luck as he was going to Brighton and could pass by Kings College. I got into his car and away we went.

On the way down to Kings College there was an incident with one of the cars and the team had to stop. It was then they realised I was not with them.!!!

When they arrived, I was there waiting for them with John Davies. (London Welsh scrum half). Knowing I did not drive everybody asked me how I got to the ground before them but I wouldn't tell them.



John Minchin used to ask me regularly how I got there but I never did tell him.

Next week was my home team debut. I got to the Clubhouse, got changed and was about to go out on the pitch when I was confronted by Bob Marshall (Roy Bishop's non-playing friend) who said "You shouldn't be in the 1st team ". We were playing Old Elizabethans. In the first 20 seconds I scored a try and went on in the game to score another two tries. I never did see a lot of Bob Marshall after that.

It was notable that one season I played every away game because certain props wouldn't play away. I played 35 away games in total.

I do not drink now because of health reasons but I was probably the best player in the Club from 4.50 pm because I could drink copious amounts of beer.

Another amusing story was when Chris Locke was getting funds for one of his Colts Tours. He came to the Clubhouse with a gallon bottle of Scotch. You had to roll up a 10 pence piece and the nearest to it won the bottle. After many 'go's' someone rolled a 10p up to the bottle, but suddenly there was a clink, the bottle broke and a gallon of scotch was deposited on the floor.

Another time, I was recovering from a leg operation and went down the Club just to watch a game, but got roped in to play centre for the 6th Team on the farmer's pitch at the back of the woods.

In the first minute I tried to tackle someone, missed and slid into a fresh cowpat which was all over my face and inside my shirt. I asked the ref if I could leave the field to wash myself down in the stream which was nearby. It was only about 18 inches deep but with steep sides. I jumped in. Unfortunately, I went into thick mud up to my armpits and could not move. Miraculously, out of nowhere, a man walking his dog came by and alerted the team to my plight. I was pulled out of the stream with the aid of the corner flag poles. I never played centre again.

I love playing the fruit machines and after playing at Colchester one day, Alan Price called me over. He told the Colchester players how lucky I was on the machines. There were two. "Sort em out" said Pricey. With everyone watching, I put my second 10 pence in and won the jackpot of £100. With this, I went onto the second machine and with my second 10 pence again, the jackpot fell at £250 this time. The Colchester boys just looked stunned in amazement.

The Club had a wonderful, friendly spirit and I have many happy memories. I look back on my playing days and yes, I was a toughie and now in my later years Cancer tried to get me but could not succeed because of the wonderful staff at Peterborough Hospital. I am now in full remission. When all this Covid thing is over I want to visit the Club and reminisce about the old times.

Keep well everybody and hope to see you soon.

Keith Clarke



Two great articles to keep you smiling in this lockdown.

If you have stories like above please forward to me at rossloveday@btinternet.com

Ross

P.S A little competition to take you down Memory Lane

Name the date - day, month and year of this fixture

10p

Harlow Rugby Football Club

ESSEX CUP 3rd round
HARLOW
v
BRENTWOOD

<u>HARLOW 1st XV</u>		<u>BRENTWOOD 1st XV</u>	
P. JENKINSON	15	J. WELMAN	
J. PARSONS	14	R. THOMAS	
G. JONES	13	M. HARGREAVES	
M. MARMION	12	M. ADAMS	
K. GLADDEN	11	J. SCOTT	
R. DRAGE	10	I. FARRAR	
M. TENNISON	9	G. SALT	
S. GRIFFITHS	8	C. GALISE (CAPT.)	
B. WHITE	7	T. SIMPSON	
M. BRUFORD	6	T. BOLTON	
P. NEWMAN	5	M. HOOTON	
M. LEESE	4	S. SMITH	
A. HARMES (CAPT.)	3	A. DAVIES	
I. C. DAWSON	2	T. LEE	
T. WHITE	1	A. SCOTT	
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Happy & Healthy New Year 2021