

The items below were assembled as a display to commemorate the Rugby Club visit to Winchester in 1988.

Rodney Mason created the display and produced the introduction. The Club President, **Peter Griffiths**, produced the main report.

The text has been reproduced exactly as the original.

Winchester

April 1988

TOUR TO WINCHESTER THE TRUTH (WELL SOME OF IT)

Elsewhere you will no doubt read what purports to be the ‘official’ description of the rugby clubs fortieth anniversary tour to Winchester. No doubt that version will change the names to protect the innocent, alter the facts to implicate the guilty and even go as far as to describe a rugby match. To balance the situation it is felt necessary to present the truth.

From the Friday night to the Monday morning the whole tour was an unmitigated success, The high spots were as follows, Friday evening Howard Hurford felt so indisposed that he had to have a shower after every pint – and that was a lot of showers. The inevitable card school followed, who won or lost was unknown, what is known however is that there were six participants and the round of drinks was five halves of bitter and one pint of Macon Rouge for a certain newsletter editor – this round was repeated twice.

Breakfast the next day was a lonely affair! After a few midday stiffeners a game of rugby was played and lost! After the après match celebrations the several groups went their own ways perhaps the most exciting event was the carnation eating contest organised by Rodney Porter in a local hostelry. Fortunately there was a wedding party in the bar and so buttonholes were readily available and

consumed despite the protestations of some of their owners. Later reunited at the teams headquarters we watched in amazement as Messrs Watts and Clare emptied the hotel of champagne and their wallets simultaneously.

On Sunday after watching the London Marathon from the safety of armchairs in the TV lounge the party split into two. The dyed in the wood tourists went to Poole to sample the delights of the Jolly Sailor, whilst the remainder played golf. On return from the golf we found that the president Peter Griffiths had been evicted from his room, the reason for this cannot be disclosed, suffice it to say, that he'll never dance the military two step again.

An impromptu river leaping contest was then organised. Regretably neither contestant Messrs Porter and Hutchinson fell in and so it was declared a draw.

An excellent tour dinner followed and then a quiet soiree around the bar ensued. Peter Hart fell in love with a plastic effigy of Sooty, Peter Griffiths lost his teeth in mid chorus of I don't want to join the army and several others performed party pieces they thought they had long forgotten.

On Monday morning we all made our separate ways home rejoicing that we would not have to put our bodies through such an ordeal for at least another forty years. Many thanks to Peter Griffiths and his organising committee – particularly Roger Seabourne for all their hard work.

R.Mason



Pre match photograph of the Winchester Touring Party

THE WINCHESTER WEEKEND 15th – 18th APRIL 1988

On Friday 15th April, from all parts of the country, members of the Rugby Club were heading for the City of Winchester. Rod Porter, John Clare, Roger Harman, Peter Hart and Len Hardy started earlier than most with a morning round at Wentworth, in preparation for the tournament golf to follow on Sunday. The entire touring party were to meet at the Southgate Hotel, an establishment founded in 1715 and named after one of the four ancient gateways to the City. Built to the design of Sir Christopher Wren, it has changed little since its early origins..

The hotel Proprietor, Stewart Alcom, a former Club Captain of Harrow RFC, gave us all a very big welcome and assured us of a happy stay. It was quite apparent early on that we had chosen well for the centre of our activities. Above all, we realised there would be no shortage of good food for our delectation. Alongside quality, quantity was the order of the day. Even Bill Prior eventually left the table replete!

Two years of talking, of planning and preparation was about to come to fruition. As people arrived old friendships were renewed, and before very long the familiar pattern of past OC's gatherings took a hold on the proceedings. A little nostalgic chat, a lot of good humoured banter and a modicum of refreshment helped steer the first evening along its merry way. Some continued with the conversation, some took to the glass, or even the bottle, whilst others simply whiled away the odd hour with a quiet game of cards. As the evening passed into Saturday morning, the more fatigued retired to their rooms. Few watched with interest the poker-faced card players, until finally only the participants in the game were left to continue their pleasures until the early hours.

The accommodation at the hotel was allocated on a first come first served basis and it was pot luck, to some extent, with whom one shared a room. Both Denis Buckingham and Terry Ellis vowed they would never, whatever the circumstances, share with the same room-mates again. Denis went so far as to say he wouldn't share the same hotel as Peter Hart, let alone the same room! He likened the experience of sharing to having a steam-hammer on one side of the bed and a herd of truffle-seeking swine on the other! Terry was somewhat bemused by the fact that he spent much of the night in a state of levitation, due entirely to the close proximity of his bed to the beds of the colossi Bill Prior and John French!

A very wet Saturday morning greeted our awakening, but the entire party managed to present themselves at the dining room to partake of a hearty breakfast, in readiness for the “Big” match of the day. Smartly attired in anniversary pullovers, members spent the morning visiting the City shopping precinct, the Cathedral or the museums. With absolute precision timing, all managed to assemble in the hotel bar the moment it was open! With equally good timing, the Saturday visitors arrived; Alan Isichei, Andy Smith and Geoff Mitchell to play football and Stu Elliot, Mick Hosegood, Len Barry and John Morgan to give support.

At 2pm, it was time to depart the hotel for the ground, Assured by Brian Jones the walk was but a short distance, we set off at a slow, rather steady pace. After what seemed an eternity, the ground appeared in the distance and, fortunately, the team survived the rigours of such exercise! If only they had followed the example set by Roger Harman and been for a training run on Friday afternoon.

Whilst the prospective players dragged leaden feet to the changing rooms the supporters refreshed themselves at the Winchester RFC bar so that they would be in good voice for the forthcoming match.

The Winchester “Vets” play football regularly, mostly against similar opposition. Their players average age was rather lower than that admitted by the OCs fifteen. However, after much strapping up, sticking on, removing this and readjusting that, the OCs emerged from the changing rooms ready to do battle. With two reserves and nine supporters, (including our man on the spot, Tim Allen), all headed to the place of conflict. The weather had by this time improved; it was quite cloudy but at least it was dry. Conditions ideally suited to the OC’s normal pattern of play.

OC’s began the game at a terrific pace and for a very long period camped in the Winchester “22”, just failing to put together the final move to produce points on the board. The forward pressure was definitely telling on Winchester and they were finding it difficult to counter the action. But for the odd hamstringing problem, lack of pace, but above all dire shortage of match practice, OC’s would have been many points in the lead. Howard Hurford had run himself ragged by this time and was obviously regretting the many trips he had made to the shower on Friday which, it seems, had sapped his strength!

In due course of the first half, persistence was justly rewarded when Alan Isichei brushed aside all before him to score between the posts. Roger Seabourne added the conversion points. Gradually Winchester were settling

down to the task before them and their younger and fitter backs had a purple patch which brought them two well deserved converted tries. At the interval Captain Rod Mason urged his men to greater things and, although Winchester has a second purple patch identical to the first, it was OC's who had the last word. Rod Porter took it upon himself to emulate Alan Isichei's first half try with a repeat between the posts to give Roger Seabourne a relatively simple conversion attempt.

OC's were certainly in the ascendancy now, with sixteen players on the field; Roger Harman having donned the green and black of Winchester to replace one of their injured players. Ironically, moments later, OC's were looking to the touchline for a replacement, but our second string reserve, Mick Hosegood, believing his services to be no longer required, had left for an early bath.

At "no-side", Winchester were declared the winners of the game by 24 points to 12. But what a worthy OC's fifteen on the day? Well done indeed to all the players, with special thanks to Alan Isichei, Geoff Mitchell and Andy Smith, who travelled down especially to play.



Rod Porter on his try scoring run

Winchester were full of praise for the OC's, not only for the game itself, but for the fine manner and spirit in which it was played. So much did they enjoy our visit they invited us to return in 1989.

Time now to repair to the clubhouse. Time to eat, to drink and to talk. Time to listen to such remarks as "twenty years ago he would have done this or that", or "twenty years ago he used to do this or that and still does this or that!" Much repartee was heard, reminiscent of the many happy match gatherings at Tentelow Lane and on this particular occasion it wasn't necessary to dream up an excuse for being late home again!

The return journeys to the hotel were by various routes and obstacles, but like bees returning to the hive all were later seen in the lounge bar doing what comes naturally to them, John French, having taken leave of his various cousins, took charge of the proceedings; he placed himself in a central position, high on a chair, to introduce those present, be they OC's, hotel guests, casual or regular bar visitors, to MR PUNCHINELLO. Dividing the gathering into groups he gave detailed instructions as to how he expected each to perform. To say the least he was a hard task master and much rehearsal was necessary before he was satisfied with the performance of the various groups. The final polished rendering was a joy to be heard and rightly given lengthy applause. The musical evening developed into the well known routine of all rugby clubs, with champagne, spirits or the humble pint, aiding and abetting the vocal chords! Well into the early hours of Sunday morning it was realised at least a couple of hours of bed rest would be advisable to enable the body to embark on the activities still to come. Those who had to play in Brian Jones's "Seven" certainly would need their sleep!

Sunday dawned bright and sunny, OC's dawned not so bright and not so sunny! A hurried breakfast for some, for fear of missing the highlights of the London Marathon on the television. For others, read of the Sunday papers, while five were reflecting in the cold light of a new day their promise of the night before to play in a seven-a-side tournament being organised by Winchester RFC! After much heart searching, common sense prevailed and the "brazen" five withdrew their earlier promises. In turn Brian Jones was forced to withdraw his side from the tournament. Not a lot of choice really with only himself and Howard Hurford available to play! They did, with a few others, support the event and by all accounts had a most successful day off the field.

Nine golfers and two assistants travelled a little way south of Winchester to Ampfield Par 3 golf course where it is rumoured that Tim Allen is the local pro. Certainly if his sartorial elegance is anything to go by, he is well suited to hold such high office. Should Len Hardy move within the area then he might be challenged for this position if appearance counts towards selection. The course was in an idyllic setting and with almost perfect weather, only the standard of golf could spoil the day.

All players were given an handicap by Golf Secretary, Peter Hart. We lesser mortals are still bewildered as to how he applies his mathematics to reach the individual figures! Peter Hart, Roger Harman, Rod Porter and assistant Reg Clisby led the way round in this prestigious competition for a valuable prize – the like of which was only known to Peter. The trio in "Designer" clothes, Len

Hardy, Roger Seabourne and Tim Allen, followed with Denis Buckingham, Rod Mason and myself bringing up the rear. It turned out that I and my two partners were given an additional handicap in the shape of assistant Bob Hutchison! Behaving like a poor man's David Bailey, he was literally "snapping" at our heels, willing us to mis-hit off the tee, fall foul of a bunker or at the very least hit out of bounds. All this to add variety to his photographic prowess. This distraction was just about tolerable, but then, having recently read a book on golf, he proceeded to point out our faults at every turn! Denis almost tee'd him up to dispatch him to oblivion!

On completion of this course, a smaller, but equally competitive, event took place on the putting green. Then the moment of truth had arrived. Peter Hart collected in all the individual scorecards for processing. After much deliberation, following his crystal ball gazing and consultation with abacus and calculator, he declared Roger Seabourne the one to mount the winners rostrum. Those of us who participated had a most enjoyable afternoon, although Rod Porter found the course difficult and did not achieve the success he had enjoyed following his Friday round at Wentworth!

It was time for afternoon tea in the pleasant surrounds of the Clubhouse prior to the return to the hotel for a quiet game of bridge, a more boisterous game of "flick" the beer mat, or simply relax in readiness for the evening's pleasures. Peter Hart and I accompanied Tim home to his Otterbourne estate to join him, wife Lena and son Timothy, for tea on the lawn! For both Peter and I this was a most pleasant way to relax before the celebration dinner. Our journey back to the hotel via the Winchester bypass was slow, and Peter could see his hoped-for game of bridge disappearing! In the meantime, many of the rest of the party took advantage of the lull to catch up on some sleep in preparation for the dinner.

There was a general air of excitement at the hotel that evening with people putting final touches to their appearance before meeting in the bar (suitably "jacketed" and "tied") for an aperitif. At 8.30pm prompt, dinner was served. A sumptuous meal as set before us; fit not only for our goodselves but for the highest in the land. Stewart had surely done us proud yet again, with no intention of letting anyone depart the hotel undernourished.

Bill Prior looked reasonably contented, but Reg Clisby was having a beef about the cool air from the open window blowing his meal away! Rod Porter needed to supplement this splendid meal with a double portion of *Dianthus Carphyllus*,

but was not joined by John French on this occasion because he has a preference for Narcissus Pseudo-Narcissus!

During the progress of the meal, I thanked our guests for joining with us this evening to celebrate our 40th anniversary. A particular thank you to Stewart for the hospitality shown to us by both himself and all members of his staff.

Secondly, a special welcome to the two representatives of Winchester RFC to thank them and their members for giving us such a pleasant day with them. To say in turn how much we have enjoyed our weekend. Sadly, two other invited guests were unable to accept our invitation to dine; Ron Jeffries, Chairman of the Association and Doug Try, Chairman of the Hockey Club, had previous engagements.

It gave me much pleasure to take wine with no fewer than nine other former Club Captains. Their very presence this evening confirming their continued loyal support of the Club. Reg Clisby took wine with the two members who had earlier in the day successfully crossed the River Itchen by “air”!

Following the formal toast to HM The Queen, I spoke briefly of the progress of the Club over the past 40 years. Denis Buckingham and I were the sole survivors here tonight of that first ever game played in 1948, and little did we realise at the first ever meeting with Alan Lyford that 40 years on we would still be very much part of this wonderful organisation. Denis, of course, has achieved the impossible by continuing to play football in 1988. Alan Lyford, now domiciled in Las Vegas, was instrumental in doing most of the spadework in those early days. Not a keen footballer himself, he became a hard working administrator who devoted much, if not all, of his private life to getting the Club off the ground.

With so little time available to me this evening, I was only able to touch briefly upon the remarkable progress made over the forty year life span. From the days of playing all “away” games to the various “home” tenancies at the Bees Club, Ruislip, the London Transport ground at Northolt and the shared tenancy with Twickenham RFC, until the time in 1960 we finally came “HOME” so to speak at Tentelow Lane. What a wonderful time that was for us all. It meant a very busy summer for all members, their families and friends. Considering the tireless effort given by everybody in readiness for the opening game in September of that year, all credit must be given to players of all fifteens who still managed to complete a successful season on the field. The playing strength of the Club progressed from one fifteen and travelling reserves, to four regular

fifteens and an occasional fifth when numbers permitted or players were available from the School First fifteen.

As a Club, we went from strength to strength and within our level of football, were a force to be reckoned with. Easter tours and Festivals occupied our Easter weekends for many years, each with its own particular memories. No doubt everyone attending the dinner this evening could fill a book with their own stories of events and happenings.

The Club entered numerous "Sevens" tournaments and were invariably successful. Our own tournament became a very popular local event, mainly because the thirty two sides entered were our regular opponents in the fifteen-a-side game. The real success story behind this is of course, yet again, the help and co-operation of members and their families

Socially I believe the Club was second to none. Suggest a social for even the most obscure reason and somebody would have had it arranged in next to no time. The many functions held at Tentelow Lane or "The Century", or indeed "The Hopbine", were always well supported. All this is further testimony to the spirit that was present then and still prevails today.

Naturally there has been some sadness over the 40 year period and though several of our members are no longer with us, their memory always will be.

Today the Club is alive and well because of people like those present this evening. It was to them I said a personal thank you. Finally, it was my pleasure and indeed privilege, to ask all to be upstanding to join me in a toast to "The Old Creightonians Rugby Football Club".

The Winchester Captain thanked OC's for the invitation to be present this evening, but above all thanked us for allowing both himself and his colleagues the opportunity of being part of what is obviously a very fine Club. He repeated the invitation to the team to visit Winchester again in 1989 and concluded by presenting to Rod Mason and myself a Winchester RFC tie. On behalf of OC's, Peter Hart presented anniversary ties to both the members from Winchester and then donning his golf hat, presented the afternoon tournament prize – a tankard – to Roger Seabourne.

Len Hardy asked those of us with good memories to cast our minds back twenty eight years to the Easter Tour to Malvern and our stay at The Horney Old Arms. The proprietor of that hotel had promised us that if we were successful in

beating Worcester RFC on the Saturday, he would donate to us a bottle of Dimple Haig. Needless to say Len, Club Captain at the time, duly accepted the bottle on behalf of the tourists! Most of us had forgotten all about this prize; the few that did remember assumed Len and his family had a pleasant evening doing justice to the contents of the bottle! To our amazement Len produced the said bottle this evening – what more appropriate occasion to sample the contents? All were given to sample this now well matured whisky. Many thanks Len for being custodian for so long. Apologies for the suggestions made in the past as to the whereabouts of the bottle!

The last announcement from the table was made by Stewart, the Proprietor, inviting us all to join him at the bar for a post meal drink. This particular drink was to be the first of any to be taken during the remaining amount of time at our disposal.

The bar was very crowded, mostly Old Creightonians with a sprinkling of “locals” and other hotel guests. The volume of chatter increased steadily as time went by and when the singing started, it was surprising the Noise Abatement Society didn’t arrive to complain of the decibel levels!

The old songs were, in the main, remembered word for word – the odd forgotten part replaced with a suitable alternative! The general atmosphere was one of carnival and cabaret, with members taking the floor in various guises. Rod Porter’s portrayal of Quasimodo with the Proprietor’s jacket as a prop was admirable! The double act of Porter and Hutchison in the same jacket was equally impressive.



**The start of the
Porter Hutchison
Quasimodo act**

Laughter abounded from all corners of the bar, so much so that at times aching ribcages were giving many cause for concern. Graham Watts, John Clare and several older members needed to leave the room momentarily to avoid having a seizure! Even the “Prune” himself, in the shape of Denis Buckingham, was in hysterics; tears rolling down his cheeks, and tears turning to floods when I encountered teething troubles with the words of some of the songs! My thanks to Brian Gibbins, Brian Jones and Rod Mason who suitably placed themselves before me ready to “catch” me out should the need arise.



Will those teeth fall out again? Rod Mason and Brian Jones wait in anticipation

Peter Hart at this point appeared to be in the throes of approaching death but, happily, after a couple of minutes we were all relieved to see the reason he was in the prone position was because he found it impossible to sit, let alone stand, during a bout of uncontrollable laughter.

Nobody, but nobody, seemed to want to retire to bed. It was only when somebody realised that we were but a few hours away from daylight that bodies started to disappear to their rooms. It was appreciated that apart from the break of day approaching, the need to drive home and, in some cases, make an appearance at the office as well would soon present itself.

Monday morning breakfast was a rather quiet affair, after all the weekend was almost over. “Sooty” sat with Peter at the table but was completely ignored. In fact Peter tended not to speak to anyone. He seemed positively outraged at the slightest noise, even the munching of cornflakes disturbing him.

And so it was time for farewells. All said they had enjoyed the weekend which made the efforts of the organising committee well worth while. At 1000am few of us remained. Just time for a short walk to the shopping area to help Rod Mason buy a present for his wife and a cup of coffee before tackling the daunting task of driving home.

Many thanks to those who helped me organise the weekend; John French, Rod Mason, Tim Allen, Brian Jones, Peter Hart and, in particular, Roger Seabourne.