



# Colleague *stories*

## Harpenden Rugby Club

**Our colleague, Simon Darby talks to us about his volunteering at Harpenden Rugby Club...**

Harpenden Rugby Club has been a part of the community for 105 years, moving to its current location at Redbourn Lane, in 1964. Although participation in rugby had declined in recent years, HRFC still manages to put out 3 senior men's teams, a senior women's team and has a large vibrant junior and minis section covering all ages and abilities, which bodes well for a great future.



**How long have you been volunteering at the club for?**

Since 2010.

**What made you volunteer to start with?**

My son decided that he wanted to take up rugby when he was 9 (he's now 21) so we started attending every weekend and Wednesday evenings. Our age group at that time had huge numbers so help was already needed. My son was keen for me to help out and so with his persuasion, I put my hand up.

**What does your volunteering entail?**

I seem to struggle to say 'no' when it comes to the club, so when I get asked to do something, I will do it!

I started off in the junior section, qualified as a coach and then due to the fact we could never get a ref when needed, ended up qualifying for that as well at junior level. The then chairman also asked me to help drive the numbers up and get the club back to 3 senior men's teams, so I ended up captaining the 3rd XV. And just because I didn't have enough to do, I qualified to referee senior rugby.

For the last 6 years I have also been a part of (and then chaired) our National Pub 7s Committee which for nearly 60 years has run one of the best 7s tournaments in the country (I'm a bit biased) with clubs like the Italian and German national 7s sides as well as teams from across the armed forces and a few elite and social teams all competing together for the glory. I've now handed that baton on so this season, I have agreed to the role of Club Discipline Secretary.

**What motivates you to keep doing it?**

Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline, Sportsmanship. These are the core values of the rugby community and something I believe makes us all better people.

**What are your favourite aspects about volunteering at the club?**

The people. We are lucky to have a great collection of members, well over 1000, all with a primary purpose of supporting the kids and seeing them progress through the age groups and into senior rugby.



Grass Roots rugby is crucial for the survival of the game and whilst we don't expect everyone to go on and play for England, we want them to have a great rugby career, be it running out with the 3XV, playing 7s or giving back and volunteering for their local club. However, we have produced more than our fair share of England players!

**What is the most challenging area?**

Apart from my fitness, it's the people. We are all different. Everyone takes information on board in their own way and reacts to it differently. Getting things done at the club needs you to be able to vary your message so everyone gets to the same point.

**Do you have a particular highlight or stand out moment that you can share?**

For me, the greatest day was when my son played his first senior men's game, and I was in the line-up alongside him, but there have been many other highs as well.

Last year, our team went to The Mount, a prison near Bovingdon where we played against a team made up of the prisoners and a few of the officers as well. Rugby is used as a tool to help the prisoners bond together, learn the rugby ethos and use that as part of their reintegration to society. Having spoken to the officers and inmates afterwards, they had tried many different sports for this purpose and rugby was the only one that worked. If you're interested, watch 'Grand Slammers: Inside HMP The Mount' on ITVX.

**What skills do you think you have gained from your time volunteering?**

Apart from all the physical challenges (I'm getting old), it has to be the people skills.

*Simon*

**Simon Darby**  
Head of Information Technology & Facilities