



# Rugby

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

It takes determination and a lot of hard work to bring local sports clubs together and Bridport Rugby Club is no exception. Senior team captain **Andrew Livingston** has spoken to some of those responsible for getting the club to where it is today.

**W**hen I was just four years old I was given an ultimatum... Ride or rugby? As a five-year-old, I thankfully opted to head with my Dad to join Bridport Rugby Club rather than play ponies with my Mum. As a child playing and training on the Brewery Ground, I had no idea of the history that built the club to where it was today.

It all kicked off in 1968, when a then 26-year-old David Williams caught an advert in the Echo calling for any interest in creating a local men's rugby team. Shandy, as he is most commonly known, was playing for the Dorchester team at the time. He told me: 'For me, a home game was away cause I'd travel from Nettlecombe to Bridport, Bridport to Dorchester and you've got to remember that roads weren't so good. But when you went on to London from there or to Plymouth to play away, it's a whole day gone.'

With this in mind, Shandy rang the author of the advertisement, John Osbourne, and the two arranged to meet that evening in the Seven Stars pub on Barrack Street. Before reaching a few 'degrees of inebriation', the two had hatched a plan to formulate a brand new rugby club for the people of Bridport. Shandy exclaimed: 'The beauty of me and him [Osbourne] was that I knew about local rugby, but he knew about local people. He'd gone to Colfox, he was a local lad. he knew everybody in Bridport.'

With the help of Shandy, Osbourne's advert had managed to drum up a squad to play their first season at Colfox school, where they even managed to scrounge a set of shirts that 'had been given up as moth-eaten ten years previous' by the school.



*The First Team photo from 1969*

'We didn't have any money and we thought "well we've started so we are going to have to get our own kit". Shirt, socks and shorts—so everyone brought their own on the proviso that if you were dropped next week you'd leave your shirt, short and socks behind.'

The first season completed and the club moved to a new home—the Brewery Ground. First-class Clifton came to visit from Bristol to christen the new home of the Bridport Rugby Club and by all accounts gave the lads from West Dorset what Shandy to this day describes in his local twang as a 'f\*\*\*in' good hiding' which was no matter as they had a lovely day and 'all got pissed'.

From talking with the now 78-year-old Shandy, it seems that drinking was slightly synonymous with the team. This may have been partly down to their recruitment strategy. He told me: 'If we couldn't get

fifteen for a Saturday [game], we would troll the pubs on a Friday night waiting for them to get pissed so we could convince them to play. That's what we used to do, but we enjoyed what we did.'

Decades passed and the club grew from strength to strength and soon had both a second team and a colts section. Still, however, they all shared the cold and damp cricket pavilion that they called a clubhouse.

Till, in 1989, former first-team player Malcolm Heaver stepped up to the position of Club Chairman. Malcolm held the position for eleven years and is largely responsible for how the club looks and runs today. He told me: 'When I became chairman, there was three things I wanted to do, one was provide training lights, second a clubhouse and third a mini section.'

'The lights were done. Got those sorted and then raising the funds for the clubhouse began in earnest.



*Celebrating the club's 50th anniversary year*



Beg, borrowing and stealing from everywhere we could and raising the money over some time, £160,000 I think it was.'

Malcolm was passionate about providing somewhere for the club to be proud to watch their club as the old clubhouse was 'a real dive'. He went on to explain: 'It was single skinned walls, I lined them out with baton and polystyrene to make it warmer and got some heaters put in there to make it as nice as we could.'

'To build the original Leisure Centre, the clubhouse had to go and we were left with a room that is now called the Bacit Studio, which was going to be the bar and I kicked up merry hell to say "it doesn't even face the pitch. How could that be a rugby club?" So they gave us a bar downstairs, which is now where the administration offices are and the club was dying, the place was horrible.'

The chairman and his printer went to all ends to raise the funds needed to get the project underway for the club to have a clubhouse they could call their own. 'I wrote to every single rugby club in the land, I used to leave the Dot Matrix printer going at 7:30 at night and it would go all night printing off envelopes. I think I'm right in saying about 2000 letters went out and we got a little back from that.'

With enough money raised, construction commenced in 1992 in conjunction with the building of the swimming pool that is bound to the Leisure Centre that looms over the club today. 'Work parties were organised and club members would form a human chain to load bricks and blocks into the shell for the subcontractor to lay.'

Travis Perkins, Bradfords, JC Phillips and Heavers all donated materials to help keep the costs down. 'The last major part was to lay the engineered oak floor. This was carried out by myself and Guy Ewert. Our knees have never recovered, every joint needed to be glued and secret nailed.'

A year later, on the 24th October 1993, the clubhouse was opened by Sir Peter Yarranton, who at the time was Chairman of the UK Sports Council and a former England international for rugby union.

Arguably, Malcolm's greatest achievement in the club was not the clubhouse, but the formation of the junior section in 1991. With the help of former First XV Captain John Greig, the club for the first time opened

its door to children to play. Malcolm explained: 'John and I started it off and I think in the first week we had about 10 or 11 and then certain parents got themselves coaching licenses and started helping to coach.'

'Bit by bit it built up and then we bought a minibus, which was the last thing I did as chairman. We started taking the kids to Poole, Blandford, Weymouth all over the place to play Sunday morning fixtures.'

Within the first waves of juniors that joined the club was a young Haydn Thomas who would later go on to play for the Exeter Chiefs and make one uncapped appearance for England. Heaver exclaims that when the future star was six he had to keep 'shepherding him off the pitch as he wasn't allowed to tackle'.

Today, Thomas has retired from playing rugby professionally and is now a senior coach with the Chiefs, but still remembers his time as a junior. He recounted to me how everyone initially trained together: 'I was five when I first started, there were no under-fives but my brothers were playing at under-sevens and under-nines, so I just went down anyway and wanted to be a part of it.'

'They were building the clubhouse and we had that

*'I wrote to every single rugby club in the land, I used to leave the Dot Matrix printer going at 7:30 at night and it would go all night printing off envelopes...'*

new and it was brilliant. I have memories of it being so cold sometimes out there training, we would have to run back into the main Leisure Centre just to warm our hands up.'

Every Saturday he and his two brothers would come and watch the seniors with his Dad whilst on a Sunday his Mum work in the kitchen, cooking 100 sausage and chips for all the juniors.

The former scrum-half says that numerous people in the club helped his development as a player. 'Kevin Bullock, Nick Woodhouse and Derrick Hoskins were pivotal in my development as a youngster.' He went on to add: 'I had a great time with my career and if it wasn't for Bridport Rugby Club I would have never done what I did.'

In 2018 the club celebrated its 50th-anniversary celebration at Freshwater Holiday Park. With John Osbourne's sad passing in 2015, Shandy marvelled on his own at the work that the two of them started in the Seven Stars back in '68.

I quizzed him on how he feels about everything the club has achieved and he explained: 'We've had a wonderful time, we've had some great dinners and some great speakers. We've done as well as anybody I would imagine in the Dorset and Wilts area.'

'What we have provided and what we have to be very proud of is the fact that so many thousands of people would have played rugby down there because the club was started in the first place. Not just me, I'm irrelevant really, but all the people that have put together over the years, the times that the coaches have given up to help the youngsters.'

'What could I have done better in life?'

## Cycling should be fun – shouldn't it?

CYCLING evokes memories of warm summer days, lanes lined with wildflowers in hedgerows, picnics by the river and carefree times pedalling along enjoying the sun. For so many of us though, these are just memories. When we think about biking now, many of us instead imagine steep hills, unflattering lycra and breaking out in an unpleasant sweat.

But there is a way we can return those happy memories to the present and make some fantastic new ones. Hikobike customers constantly confirm this with tales of their trips and plans.

The first time you get on an electric bike and pull smoothly away, you can recall why cycling really can be fun. Overcoming the resistance is suddenly easy. Customers who have not ridden for years have become irrepensible enthusiasts once more.

Hikobike UK sells quality, affordable electric bicycles suitable for every type of rider. The bikes are designed in New Zealand (NZ) and the components are selected from the best worldwide suppliers.



Having come across Hikobike during a trip to NZ in 2018 to visit his wife's family, Mark Essame and his team decided to start importing these bikes to the UK. 'I was really impressed by the design of the bike and quality of the components' explained Mark. 'I could see a space in the UK market for a well-priced electric bike that combined the quality and style Hikobike had to offer'.

It took until early 2020 to get some bikes to the UK but starting an electric bike business during the first national lockdown turned out to be



fortuitous timing. Electric bike sales were really picking up as people moved away from public transport and were looking for ways to enjoy the Spring sun. Electric bicycles not only offer that, but also the ability to go further and faster than a standard bicycle. Being able to choose how much to use the motor means you can push yourself as hard as you like, whilst knowing you can travel significant distances.

Mark, a trained bike mechanic, runs Joshuas Harvest Store alongside Hikobike. Joshuas focuses on local produce and ethical and healthy living, which Mark said fits really well with the electric bike business: 'E-bikes provide a low cost, energy efficient mode of transport which is both practical and sustainable. I am sure the demand for them will keep increasing as people look for new ways to decrease their environmental impact'.

Hikobike stock a range of bikes, which cater for people looking for e-bikes at different price levels and for both city and country riding. The Hikobike philosophy incorporates designing and manufacturing comfortable, functional electric assist bikes from the best quality components, which allow the user to experience trouble free riding adventures for years to come.



*Tempted to try out an electric bike? Hikobikes are available to view at Joshuas Harvest Store, Ottery St Mary, Devon, EX11 1NU. Visit them to remind yourself, yes cycling is fun. [www.hikobike.co.uk](http://www.hikobike.co.uk)*