

May Newsletter 2025/26

Email: countyoffice@middlesexrugby.com

President's Corner

First of all, I need to cover off on the Club's Supper due to be held at Grasshoppers RFC on Friday 5th June which unfortunately has had to be postponed this season because of low numbers. Despite another bumper year of success for our clubs, which we were due to honour at the function, numbers were disappointingly too low to justify going ahead with the event. It is a real shame, especially after the success of our previous years where our Champion Clubs both men and women were rightly honoured for their success. We had nearly halved the ticket price to make it much more affordable, especially for our players, but that didn't make any difference. We are determined to make this a success going forward and with that in mind we will be reaching out to you to see what it was about the event that failed to make such an impact. Clearly, we got it wrong this year for which we apologise but with your help we will get it back on track and make it an important date in your diary for next year. Thank you to all those who worked so hard to prepare for the function, in particular Peter Baveystock who had the lead on the Club's Supper and Grasshoppers who were due to be the host club for their patience and understanding. Once we have the feedback from you and the clubs the work will start for next season

Anyway, back to normal duties. On Tuesday 21st April we hosted Ruislip at Harrow in the second semi-final of the NW Middx Floodlit Cup. Excellent game narrowly won by Ruislip who will play Ealing 1871 in the final in early September. Well done to Micheal Searls who has worked so hard in resurrecting the County's second oldest Cup Competition and to the clubs who have supported this competition. It has new life which is great to see

Wednesday 22nd April I was at the Allianz for an Adult Competitions meeting.

Then back on Friday 24th for a RFU Council meeting followed by the SGM. Needed to watch some rugby following all the politics at and leading up to the SGM so popped into Grasshoppers on my way home to watch their vets play Wasps FC. Caught up with Steve Partridge. Watch some rugby, cleared my mind then home. Sometimes you need reminding that it's all and only about getting 36 players on a pitch to play the game they love

Just wanted to thank all those clubs who voted or gave me their proxies. In the end it was most important that clubs voted. For me I believe that the SGM result was a resounding victory for the Community Game and the voice of our CBs and Clubs. Still, plenty of work to do to retrieve what was good about the Governance Review but not at the expense of the Community Game. Ultimately the RFU Board needs to remember that the Clubs are the members and had a right and need to retain their voice and they made a strategic mistake by wrapping all the changes into a yes or no answer.

On Saturday 25th I went to Beaconsfield to support Belsize Park in the Regional 2 play-offs. An excellent game narrowly on by the home team who go through to play HAC the following week at Chiswick

On Tuesday 28th I was at the South Group AGM and meeting whilst Eddie covered the West Group at Grasshoppers on the same evening. Good meeting. Excellent hospitality from Old Pauline FC

The following day I was on a Zoom meeting, with some colleagues from RFU Adult Competitions and representatives from Yorkshire discussing their league structure for next season

On Saturday 2nd I was at Chiswick watching HAC beat Beaconsfield to reach the R2 accession final to played against Maidenhead the following Saturday

On Thursday 7th I was on a Regional 1 Replacements meeting on Zoom

Then on Saturday 9th May I was at the 7's at Wasps. Really excellent afternoon of rugby but at the same time as a Management Committee we were far too stretched to cover all we needed to. We had the

men's county championship fixture against Eastern Counties at Chiswick, the 7's at Wasps, the women's county championship side at Harpenden against Herts, Old Hamptonians and Old Grammarians in the Community Cup semi-finals and finally HAC at Maidenhead in the Regional 2 Accession Final. I take responsibility for this, and we will be better than we were this weekend. Anyway, if we weren't as good as we could have been resounding victories for the men and women in their first round of County Championship fixtures, a first ever fixture and victory for our women's vets' side against a Herts Women's Vets side. Commiserations to HAC, Old Hamptonians and Old Grammarian's who all unfortunately lost.

This Saturday 16th May unfortunately I was unable to travel to East London RFC to support the men's and women's county championship teams against Essex. I had already committed to doing the presentations for the RFU Southern Community Cup Finals at Dings Crusaders.

This week I have committed to eight webinars for Regional 1 and Regional 2 Clubs as we look to get the feedback for the new Play-Off Competition and explain the expectations about the Regional 1 Replacements

Still plenty going on and I haven't even covered the County SGM except to say thank you to Eddie, Tim and David Hiles for all their hard work and to Simon Hardcastle who has had the worst job of pulling it all together. More to follow on the SGM, but a date in your diary please for Monday 15th June at Harrow RFC 7.30pm

Andrew Smart

President Middlesex Rugby

[Message from Chair, Eddie Keal](#)

Another season end approaches and the Management team is ticking off all the finals, celebrations, tournaments and invitations we are delighted to attend. Apologies if the blazers have appeared to be a little thin on the ground, but with

so many Representative matches to cover we haven't been able to go anywhere en masse. I'm sure that's a good thing, and we've enjoyed sharing the load.

You will have seen the results of the 2nd XV vote, which brings us into line with almost every other County in England. We're working our way through the consequences and will do our utmost to make sure we optimize things for our clubs.

It's a great shame, as Andy Smart mentions above, that we have had to cancel the County Club Awards Supper. We need to better understand the reasons for the lack of interest. We changed the format to hopefully make it more accessible than the Dinner, but it seems not to have hit the spot. We must find a better way to celebrate our clubs' success together. The new County logo with the Middlesex emblem in the correct colours (predominantly rec) has been very well received. We'll doll it out to the rest of the playing kit as we go through our normal refresh cycle. We will also upgrade our blazer badges, ties and stationery (tell me if you think these are still important!) as time goes by. The first non-playing priority will be our social media presence and that has begun.

We're at the point where we start thinking about next season's Middlesex Management Board and the other key roles in the County. Consider this an open invitation to call me (or any one of the team) if you want a chat about vacancies and opportunities.

Finally, please get a club rep to attend the Special General Meeting at Harrow RFC on the 15th June at 7.30

It's admin, but it's important to stay on top of these things, and we must have Member support to make the changes we need to continue to flourish.

All the best

Eddie

Eddie.keal@middlesexrugby.com

Message from Steve Partridge, Chair of Competitions

The season is now over for all Middlesex clubs, with all competitions completed.

Regarding leagues, I want to focus on our own county leagues. We have had no choice but to return to our clubs last week to request a new vote on allowing lower 15's into the leagues. We have had this request raised from some of our clubs, and since our split from Hertfordshire, we have been short of clubs in our own county leagues, with a few clubs deciding to play their rugby in alternative CB's leagues. This pending vote only affects the teams playing in our own leagues, and there is no intention to rejoin Hertfordshire at this stage, but to allow our clubs the choice, should they want it, subject to a yes vote.

Personally, I have never been a fan of allowing lower 15's into the leagues, but the landscape is changing, rugby is shrinking in our county, and we need to look at all options to ensure we have a competitive, structured, and enjoyable offering for all clubs. More information to follow in the next newsletter

Middx Merit Tables

Moving on to Merit Tables, we have now completed our league and cup schedule with just the Vets Cup final left to play. Finchley – Finsbury Park on the 22nd May at Finchley. Good luck to both teams.

The league Champions and 2nd-place promoted teams are as follows

Middlesex Division 1 Merit table Champions: **Ealing Trailfinders 1871 2's** with **London Japanese** joining them in promotion to Premier Merit next season.

Middlesex Division 2 Merit table Champions: **Belsize Park 4ths** with **Hammersmith & Fulham 3's** joining them in promotion to Division 1 next season.

Middlesex Division 3 Merit table Champions: **Actonians 2's** with **Chiswick 3's** joining them in promotion to Division 2 next season.

Middx 7's

Last weekend saw our annual Middx 7's run expertly by Laurel Dunne, Sophie Maynell, Anderson & Fizz!. Hosted to the usual lofty standards at Wasps FC (thanks to Kate & Maisie and all the bar staff). We had 7 women's teams from 5 clubs, 11 men's teams from 9 clubs, and our own Middlesex U20S entering a team. An excellent day, with some fantastic rugby, and great prizes given out to our clubs. The winners as follows

Men's Social Cup – Winners **Hammersmith & Fulham 1** Runners-up **Ruislip**

Men's Social Plate – Winners **Chiswick** Runners-up **Middlesex U20S**

Men's Super Social Cup – Winners: **London Japanese** Runners-up: **Old Paulines**

Men's Super Social Plate – Winners **Harrow** Runners-up **Hammersmith & Fulham 2**

Women's Social Cup – Winners **Wasps FC 1** Runners-up **Hammersmith & Fulham**

Women's Social Plate – Winners Grasshoppers Runners-up **Wasps FC 2**

Steve Partridge

Middlesex chair of competitions

Groups Report

The Groups and our clubs following the last round of AGMs/Group meetings across April now begin a well-earned break before the season begins again in September.

So just a quick update. We started with the North-West meeting on the 8th April hosted excellently by Ruislip with Eddie in the Chair for the AGM, Simon Hardcastle stepping in to cover Mark Foster who was unwell, as the Secretary. It was also good to see both Bob Lawless and Tim Miller from the Management Committee in attendance. Both myself (Harrow) and Mark (OMTs) were voted back in as the North-West Chair and Secretary respectively. It was a very well attended and lively meeting, the best I think for some time with some excellent hospitality from the host club

Then on Monday 13th to the North Group meeting at Old Grammarians. Again, Eddie was in the chair for the AGM. Both Jon Boyle (Hampstead) and Debbie Stockman-Rose (Old Grammarians) were elected back into post as North Group Chair and Secretary respectively. Again, another well attended and interesting meeting very well chaired by Jon and once again excellent hospitality from the host Club.

The West Group AGM and Group meeting were held on Tuesday 28th April at Grasshoppers RFC with Peter Baveystock chairing the AGM. Group Chair Andy Brooks (Old Isleworthians) and Group Secretary Nick Dance (Grasshoppers) were both re-elected into post as Group Chair and Group Secretary respectively.

On the same day Tuesday 28th April Old Pauline were hosting the South Group AGM with me in the chair before handing over for the Group Meeting. Once again Paul Baskh (Old Pauline) was re-elected as Group Chair with Lyndon Walters (Hammersmith and Fulham) as Group Secretary

After the Group AGMs then all that is left is for the Group Officers to elect their Group Chair to represent the Groups on Management

Andrew Smart

Chair Group Officers

Middlesex Coaching & Referee Development

Coach Development

This season the Middlesex Coach Education Programme has run **13** sessions which have been available to all of Middlesex Coaches. The themes have been varied and have attracted **301** mini, youth and senior coaches to the variety of sessions. In addition, the coach development programme has involved **152** youth players from our Middlesex clubs. Both our partner Academies, Harlequins & Saracens have contributed to developing our coaches involved with the age grade and beyond.

Thanks to the following clubs for hosting a coaching & referee development session this season - Hampstead RFC, University College School, (UCL) Grasshoppers RFC, Harrow School and London Welsh RFC, Chiswick RFC, Ruislip, Hazelwood, Ealing Trailfinders, Old Grammarians RFC, Twickenham RFC & Epping Upper Clapton RFC

Upcoming Middlesex Coach Education Sessions

Monday 01st June 2026 Theme of “**Safety in building an effective Scrummage**” at Hazelwood, Course Tutor Richard Pryor. Richard was a London Irish Academy Coach, currently Head of Rugby at Berkhamsted School

Wednesday 10th June 2026 Theme of “**Get tackle and contact ready for next season**” at Pinner RFC. Dan Cottrell who is widely known for his work with Rugby Coach weekly and played at the top of the game and is well known for his coaching clinics both in the school and club scene throughout the Country

Thursday 11th June 2026 Theme of RFU “**Kicking Workshop**” at Grasshoppers RFC, RFU Course Tutor TBC

Monday 15th June 2026 Theme of “**Coaching Craft**” at Hendon RFC. Course Tutor Russell Earnshaw. Russell has played in the Professional game with Bath & the Barbarians and coached at international level. Russell brings a new dimension to coaching

Thursday 18th June 2026 Theme, RFU Tackle safe at Ruislip RFC, RFU Course Tutor TBC

Tuesday 30th June 2026 Theme “**In and around the breakdown workshop**” at Ealing Trailfinders. Course Tutor Jack Pattison, Jack has been an Academy coach at London Irish and Saracens Academy. Jack is currently coaching with Gloucester RFC as Breakdown Coach. Jack is looking forward to sharing his experiences with Middlesex coaches.

All the above courses will be advertised on the Middlesex Social Media platforms.

Middlesex Clubs in Action

The below photographs were taken during April 2026. Where Hazelwood hosted a Scrum Half and Coaching Craft Workshop Tutored by Patrick O’Grady and Russell Earnshaw. Both these sessions will be run in North Middlesex during the summer Months.



Referee Development

This season Middlesex have run a “**Young Match Officials Take up the Whistle Courses**” at Ealing Trailfinders, Twickenham RFC, Old Grammarians RFC, Grasshoppers RFC and Epping Upper Clapton RFC. A total number of **70** Middlesex volunteers have attended these short referee courses.

Upcoming Middlesex Referee Courses

Saturday 27th June 2026. Ealing Trailfinders will be hosting an RFU Level 2 “Ready2Referee” course. This is the first time Middlesex have run the new “Ready2Ref course, which has superseded the “ERRA”. The course Tutor is Hannah Everitt

In addition to the “Take up the Whistle Courses” RFU Referee Trainer Bob Ockenden has run 2 Referee Education evenings to support all the volunteers who have completed a “Take up the Whistle Course”

If Your Club would like to Host a short Referee Course, please get in touch.

Middlesex Referees in Action

The photograph below is of London Society Referees who were all in action on Saturday 9th May 2026 refereeing the games at Wasps who hosted the Middlesex 7s.

What was interesting is that 7 out of the 10 referees had participated in a Middlesex Take up the Whistle course, before progressing to The London Society of Referees.



Focus on Middlesex Coaches

It was nice to catch up with Jenny Hudson recently at a Coach Education session. I first met Jenny at a Middlesex Coaching session some 7 years ago. On that occasion Jenny was the only female coach in attendance. The session was very well attended and what stood out was how Jenny integrated with other coaches and how passionate Jenny was with the “hows & whys” of technical & tactical coaching. Here we are some years later with Jenny doing great things with player development and still has much enthusiasm in her own personal development. Jenny is at the heart of coaching within the Middlesex Girls development programme and is keen to share experiences or help with mentoring with any coach looking to develop their coaching & teaching skills

Focus on Middlesex Coach Jenny Hudson, Middlesex U16 and U18 Girls Coach



My love for rugby began when I started coaching in the Netherlands in 2017, when both my kids started playing and the team needed more coaches. I grew up playing competitive soccer and ice hockey in Canada and had coached girls' soccer U14 and U16 there. I loved coaching but knew very little about rugby so had to learn fast!

I coached for 3 years in the Netherlands, starting with the U6s and learning the laws along with the players. When we moved to England in 2016, I helped with the coaching squad at Teddington in SW London. It was quite different than European

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rugby and I enjoyed learning different coaching techniques.

Being a non-player, I felt the need to get as many qualifications as possible. In 2019, I completed the coaching course and attended the refereeing course in 2021, as well as many scrummaging, line out, and any other courses I could find. I've travelled all over south England finding ways to learn more about the game.

When my daughter had to leave Teddington due to a lack of girls, I became passionate about supporting women's and girls' rugby. I moved to coaching at Harlequin Amateurs, clustering at times with Wimbledon, London Irish and Teddington once they got their girls teams set up. I realised that the girls sport requires a different level of support and focus than the boys and helping girls achieve great things through rugby has been amazing.

I began coaching at Middlesex several years ago with the U13 girls, moving up to U16 and U18 as my confidence in coaching grew. I absolutely love coaching those girls, watching how they grow as players and people. Jok Dunbar is a great team manager, extremely supportive, helping us become better coaches and provide leadership for the girls.

I am extremely driven to help the girls become strong, both in body and mind. I love fitness and weight training and do CrossFit competitions when I can. I incorporate a lot of strength and fitness into my sessions with the Middlesex girls and encourage them to become as strong as they can, both for their physical and mental health. I love hearing how many of the girls I've coached have gone on to university or more competitive rugby, and how it has helped them achieve goals they've set for themselves.

Rugby provides so many benefits to the girls. I am extremely proud to coach at Middlesex and love seeing the positive impact rugby has on the girls we coach. They are becoming stronger, more resilient, and with a fundamental belief in themselves and their teammates.

For further information on any of the above coaching articles or if any Middlesex club would like to host a coaching event, please do get in touch.

***Bob Lawless, Chair of Middlesex Coaching (M)
07803 196 409.***

All the best

Bob

What's On

To: Members of the Middlesex County Rugby Football Union. Date 15th May 2026

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING (First calling notice)

Notice is hereby given that a Special General Meeting of Middlesex County Rugby Football Union will be held at Harrow RFC on Monday, 15th June 2026 at 7.30 p.m.

AGENDA

To receive and approve the updated Rules of Middlesex County Rugby Football Union (previously circulated with meeting notice). In addition, I attach a note from Eddie Keal our Chair outlining and explaining the rationale for the amendments (see below).

Dr. Tim Miller

Secretary & Head of Governance

Dear Middlesex Members,

I thought it might be helpful to explain the calling notice for a Special General Meeting. I know regulatory administration isn't top of anyone's agenda at the end of a long season, so please bear with me. We are asking for your permission to make a few changes to the Rules under which we operate – as a Society governed by the Cooperative and Community Benefit Societies Act, and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Firstly, we are correcting a couple of items to do with notice periods for General Meetings. This should give everyone more time to understand any motions that are proposed and more time for the gap between changes to proposals and the General Meeting. It seems sensible and much fairer to me. We are also formally changing the “Committee” to the “Management Board” which is something we did in practice several years ago.

The biggest change is to remove the term limits and the 3-year elected periods for service on the Management Board. We consider it an unnecessary restriction for a simple, member-run Society. Officers and Board Members will need to be elected by you, the Membership, for each year. All positions are open to all Members and will remain so. Finally, there are a few typos and redundancies (such as removing Fax numbers) which needed a little tidying up. Although these changes are not going to have any great impact on you, your Clubs or what we do, they are important.

I’m asking for you to please turn up and support them with a simple vote. The SGM will be short and focused. Please send a delegate with your Club vote. They will be made very welcome!

Regards
Eddie
Management Board Chair