

## OWRFC 2018-19 Report

Keen followers of Old Wellingtonians RFC will recognise a bit of a pattern to these annual reports. An unquestionably talented group of players who sleepwalk from September to December, and then awaken to go more or less unbeaten from Christmas until the end of the season. You could liken us to France in many respects - we live for the jouer, and the opposition rarely know 'which OWRFC' will turn up.

But on reflection it was a hugely positive season. Our squad matured significantly, with many of those who joined in recent years really bedding in and bringing the even newer recruits closer into the heart of the team with every game. A notable mention must go to the cornerstone of our pack, Chris Parrish (T '13), who in only his second season at the club has taken on added responsibility as one of our vice-captains, and in the final fixture put in a hit so big that even the Premiership tight-head watching from the touchline had a hard time containing his elation.

The retirement of Sean Starling (L '04) and Dougie Harrison (O '00) was always going to leave some big shoes to step into in the front (and back) row, with loose head being a particularly tough position to fill. Regular front rowers Andrew Robertson (Pn '04), Hamish Fletcher (C '09) and Kirpal Sahota all put in shifts, as the wizen heads of George Byrd (Bn '08), Nick Dennis, Nick Holding-Parsons and James Tozer all combined behind them to give us a solid platform at the set piece.

In the backline, our dynamic half-back pairing of Liam and Tom Gwynne once again gave our attacking plays a tempo and spark that saw us score 78 tries over 18 fixtures. Vice-captain Cam Brown (S '11) and Charlie Crichton continued to marshal the defensive efforts from the centres and combined well with a back three featuring newcomers Charlie Barrow (Bn '13), Jon Roper and Nick Stewart, supported by James Rendell (S '10) and the experienced Robbie Offer (Pn '11). The sporadic cameo from Paul Webb (Pn '15) never went amiss, travelling down from Birmingham to fill the no.15 shirt whenever called upon.

While initially league points proved difficult to accumulate, our post-Christmas form saw us string together a run of results befitting our ability. Finishing the campaign comfortably in the top half of the table, we're now well-placed to push for promotion in the upcoming season.

Topping the points table in his first full season as captain was fly-half Tom Gwynne, with a personal haul of 124 (T6, C38 P6), while Cam Brown's nine trips over the whitewash earned him the award for top try scorer.

Sadly, we must bid a fond farewell and say a monumental thank you to two club stalwarts who have chosen to hang up their boots. Kirpal Sahota has been a warrior in the front row, and always a lively presence at club socials, where we are sure to see him again! Whether at lock, flanker or wing(!), Nick Dennis epitomised the 'first name on the team sheet' label. Playing tirelessly for OWRFC for well over a decade, he saved some of his best rugby for his final few games, and we thank him greatly for his contribution over the years.

Finally, we must thank **Jules Benkert** at Canmoor for the continued support in sponsoring OWRFC, and to all the friends, family and ground staff who enable us to go out there and play each weekend.