

RETURN TO THE ROCK IN APRIL

It's Rugby at the Rock, but not as we know it! London Broncos played Keighley behind closed doors on Saturday in Rugby League's Betfred Challenge Cup 1st Round. Jamaican international Gideon Boafa scores for Broncos, who won a thrilling match by 24-10 to go on to play York City Tigers in the second round.
[Photo: <https://backthebroncos.com>]



Welcome to Parknews The Rock will re-open for Members and Supporters on 17 April provided - touch wood - there are no significant further Covid setbacks to blow us off course. To mark this auspicious occasion, a **"Return to the Rock"** event is planned, with an open air bar in the afternoon / evening that meets Covid restrictions. The day's events are still being planned, but it looks likely to be some tag rugby in the morning, with matches in the afternoon played to Ready4Rugby rules. Current thinking is that although admission will be free, it may be necessary to book a table for 6. Keep the date in your diary and watch for announcements. It will be a great opportunity to meet with your old Park mates and perhaps to make some new ones. We are also planning a **Club Sports Day** for 01 May. We'll also be opening up for this summer of sport including live screenings of the **Euros & British & Irish Lions** keep a lookout for further details in *Parklife* and our social media.

This all follows agreement between the RFU and the Government on a staged return to full contact 15-a-side Rugby by 31 May, **providing there are no upswings in the Covid-19 figures**. A detailed calendar was published on March 5 outlining the route towards a return to 'normal' fixtures. The key stages are:

March 29: Return to contact training without scrums and mauls. Contact should be built incrementally and RFU guidance states that training sessions should not exceed 20 minutes of contact at this stage.

April 26: Matches can be played under the adapted laws. (see previous Parknews for details of those laws)

May 17: Here it is anticipated we can go back to full contact training, assuming that step 3 of the government roadmap is implemented

May 31: Full contact matches could be staged (dependent on step 3)

June 21: End of all restrictions

In respect of the **First XV**, the Covid rules have meant that the senior squad have been unable to train together for some time, and will need to get back to full fitness – particularly in contact areas – but we are actively looking at the possibilities for staging matches from 31 May. Everyone can identify with NCA Chairman, John Inverdale when he observed, "You can imagine a glorious, early summer's day, a packed rugby club, loads of people there, money over the bar and a sense of a new dawn breaking". But we do need to see how things progress with

Future events

**Saturday 17 April
in the morning**

Rosslyn Park Netball Club

RPNC Surrey v Putney 1

Home 09:30

RPNC Kingston v Putney 2

Home 11:00

Home matches are at Roehampton Uni - details and directions inside this newsletter - supporters welcome. Admission is free.

in the afternoon

RETURN TO THE ROCK

A day of Rugby fun and a chance to re-unite with your friends at the Rock with an open-air bar as the Club re-opens. Look out for further details.

Thursday 24 June

LONDON FLOODLIT 7s

Home 17:00

Please reserve this date in your diaries because, if Covid recovery goes to plan, this could well be the best tournament yet. A great evening's entertainment on a mid-summer evening. More details nearer the date.

All events are subject to Covid recovery going to plan. All Government Covid rules in force at the time will be strictly applied at all events - we want everyone to enjoy themselves, to feel safe and not to risk another lockdown!



The Park Netball girls will be starting their season on Saturday 17 April, when both of our teams have Local Derby matches against Putney A & B teams. See below for details.

the squad before absolutely committing to play on that date.

The return to rugby guidelines affect **all Park rugby sections**. RFU Rugby Development Director, Steve Grainger said: "This is fantastic news for the community game and we are pleased to be able to publish our plan for a phased return to full contact rugby. It's wonderful to see light at the end of the tunnel and we are as delighted as clubs and players across the country that they will soon be able to resume training and, subject to each step on government's roadmap being achieved, progress towards an exciting season of rugby for 2021/22 from September." As we go to press it is unclear whether the clubsides or Slingbacks will be looking to play 15-a-side matches as soon as permitted.

One event that we can hopefully all look forward to is the **London Floodlit 7s**, for which we have inked in the evening of Thursday 24 June. More details in due course, but please do keep that date free in your diary. If you, or someone you know, might be interested in sponsoring, or hiring marquee space to entertain friends and / or business contacts please contact our Sponsorship Manager, Jodie Rockett in the Club Office.

Less positive news about the **Rosslyn Park HSBC National Schools 7s**. We have been liaising with the RFU as to how we could run the tournament during the summer. A final decision as to whether and how to proceed will be taken on 29 March, but as things stand there are considerable obstacles to overcome.

RP Netball Club

Good news for the Park netball girls is that their sport goes full on from 17 April. The home matches are played at Roehampton University Netball Courts, Froebel College, Roehampton, London SW15 5PJ, very close to the car park. Supporters are very welcome. The entrance to use is the one on Roehampton Lane, close to the corner of Clarence Lane, almost opposite Queen Mary's Hospital, just follow the signs in the campus from there. Buses 33, 165 and 493 stop more-or-less outside the entrance and the 85, 170 and 430 pass close by.



We have two teams playing each week: RPNC Surrey are the more senior team and play in the Surrey League, RPNC Kingston play in the Kingston League. Both teams had really successful debut seasons last year and are determined to march onwards and upwards.

Our netballers have the following fixtures lined up:

- HOME - 17th April 2021
- 9.30AM RPNC Surrey vs Putney A
- 11.00AM RPNC Kingston vs Putney B
- HOME - 24th April 2021
- 9.30AM RPNC Surrey vs Capital Nuns
- 11.00AM RPNC Kingston vs Capital Nuns
- HOME - 1st May 2021
- 9.30AM RPNC Surrey vs Karisma A
- 11.00AM RPNC Kingston vs Karisma B
- AWAY - 8th May 2021
- 9.30AM RPNC Surrey vs ALPHA NC
- 11.00AM RPNC Kingston vs ALPHA NC
- AWAY - 15th May 2021
- 9.30AM RPNC Surrey vs Oxshotts A
- 11.00AM RPNC Kingston vs Oxshotts B
- HOME - 22nd May 2021
- 1.00PM RPNC Surrey vs Walton & Hersham A
- 2.30PM RPNC Kingston vs Walton & Hersham B

Doubtless the girls will "**Return to the Rock**" after their matches on 17 April to take part in the festivities in their own inimitable style.

London Broncos

Last Saturday the club staged its first ever Rugby League match when London Broncos played Keighley at the Rock behind closed doors. There are three more matches scheduled (27 March, 24 April and 09 May) which are also behind closed doors. On these afternoons access to the ground is closely controlled – even our own staff have to carry accreditation to get to the office! – so please do not plan to visit the ground on those afternoons. After those dates the Broncos First team will continue to train at the ground midweek, but they have no further weekend matches planned at the Rock, and further information on any weekend matches at the Rock after that will be announced in due course.

90 Not Out

That great Park supporter and character Jim Willerton celebrated his 90th birthday on the 28th February with a Zoom call, along with Claire, his daughter, and a few of his best Park mates - old faces from "Gordon's Corner", Will Thorogood, Judith, Don Yule and Martin, amongst others. Jim was on good form. All can't wait to get back to the Park for a 1s game... Surely everyone at the Club will wish to be associated with congratulating Jim on a splendid innings so far and hope he'll continue to carry his bat for a good few seasons yet.

Our former grounds

2: Gospel Oak

After two seasons at South End Green, at the end of the season in 1891 Park banked a profit of five pounds ten Shillings and sixpence and moved to a new ground at Gospel Oak, just north of Gospel Oak station (roughly where the athletic track at Parliament Hill Fields now stands). It was then effectively a farmer's field, but at least meant they had their own paddock and could erect permanent goal posts.

It was Park's first season as full members of the RFU, and their first

in the now familiar red and white hoops. Membership had grown to 65 and the club was able to field a second XV on a regular basis. Changing facilities were hired at two shillings and sixpence (12.5p) a week at the Old Oak Tavern, nearby on the corner of Mansfield Road. It was quite a characterful pub in those days (local legend had it that there was a secret tunnel leading down to the underground Fleet River, and that Guy Fawkes and his men had lodged there before attempting to blow up Parliament, floating their explosives down the river which flowed into the Thames). Unfortunately the Luftwaffe were a bit more successful with their explosives and the friendly local pub that stands on the site today, bearing the same name, is a fairly nondescript post-WW2 construction and nothing like the one the players changed in.

The first match played at the ground was on 01 October 1881 against Stonebridge (who were based at Willesden). The match finished a goal-less draw, Park claiming the spoils having scored 3 tries to their opponents' one. The following month saw Park play Ealing for the first time, the match finishing 0-0. They are our second oldest opponents still in existence (the oldest are Upper Clapton, whom we played in our first season when they were known as Orion). The ground was reported to be in good condition at the beginning of the season, but alas that situation did not last. Only one home match was possible after Christmas because of the awful state of the waterlogged pitch.

As a side note, on 18 February 1882 that season Rosslyn Park played in what is now London SW15 for the first time, playing away to Barts Hospital at the old Half Moon ground, just off Lower Richmond Road, almost opposite the pub of that name. Park lost by 2 goals to 1.

Unplayable

As the lessees of a frequently unplayable ground, the club came perilously close to winding-up its affairs. Indeed it was only the determination of the club's founder Charles Hoyer Millar that saved the day. The AGM was far from entirely of a mind that the effort was worth it, but he was not going to stand by and see his creation fold. He carried the day and determinedly set off to raise the £10 necessary to fix the drainage and, largely with Members' donations, was successful in his endeavours. He was rewarded with a successful season playing-wise and membership rose to 73.

The Club's fifth season, 1882-83, saw the prestigious name of Richmond added to the fixture list (though they only sent a second XV – the first match against their strongest squad was not until 1890). This season was Millar's last as a player, as he was getting married. He was then 28, which was incredibly old for an active player in those days. He played in 14 of the 16 matches that season and was presented with an inscribed carriage clock at the end of the season. He was made President of the club at the AGM, a position he occupied for 55 years until retiring in 1939. Nor was he just a figurehead – he took an active interest in the club's affairs throughout, despite a career as a mining engineer that frequently took him all over the world.

Looking back many years later he remembered the good social life then as a player. The team would always hit the West End after Saturday's match. When the 'Pavilion' opened at Piccadilly Circus, "the club played a not inconspicuous role in the inaugural celebrations". Perhaps things haven't changed that much over the years!

Evicted

At the end of the following 1884-85 season the club was dealt another hammer blow, being evicted from the ground which they had only recently paid out to make playable. Presumably the club that replaced them there – UCS Old Boys – offered a higher rent, but the precise reason appears to be unrecorded.

The club took a new tenancy with West Middlesex Cricket Club at Gunnersbury Lane, Acton for 1885-86 and it was from here – after an inauspicious first season - that Rosslyn Park began to become a real force in the game, thanks primarily to two outstanding players (one of whose grandson is on the Club's Management Board today). More of that further on in this newsletter.

"JV" – England's oldest International

One of the great men of Rosslyn Park, J V Smith - an Honorary Life Member of the club - is believed now to be England's oldest living International player. John Vincent Smith, universally known as JV, made his England debut on the wing against Wales in 1950, scoring the only try in an 11-5 defeat. Although it was a poor year for the England team he scored four tries, a record that would stand for the next 30 years.



Those performances were enough to earn him a place on that year's British Lions tour of New Zealand. But he decided instead to continue his studies for a degree at Cambridge, a decision which almost certainly truncated his international career. A proud son of Gloucestershire, he started out with the Stroud club before moving to the big city and playing for Rosslyn Park, Barbarians and England.



He was a member of the legendary Park Sevens team that became the first English team to win the world-famous Melrose 7s in the Scottish borders, an achievement greeted by the crowd with total silence!

However, JV nearly didn't get to play rugby at all. During the Second World War he signed up for the Paras, but fractured his spine on a training exercise. Another injury years later, a shoulder this time, truncated his playing career. But it could not quash his passion for the sport. He became one of Rugby's top administrators, first representing Gloucestershire on the RFU Committee and later becoming President of the RFU in 1982. At the end of his term of office he donated to the club a touch judge's flag from each of the 5 Nations that season to mark his presidency. They are still on display.

JV has been an active member of Park ever since his playing days, regularly driving up to home matches from his Amberley, Gloucestershire home (and he has been a permanent fixture whenever Park played in or near Gloucestershire) until a fall last year, added to health problems, somewhat curtailed his activities. However, this great man of rugby is recovering well despite being in his ninety-fifth year and so will hopefully be seen again at the Rock next season.

400 Club

The February draw winners were - £100 Roddy Golightly, £50 Marcel Fenez and £25 Philip Francis. If you would like to help your club while having the chance to win monthly cash prizes (and an end-of-season 'Jackpot') then the 400 Club could be just what you are looking for. Contact Boothy in the Club Office on 020 8876 1879 for full details.

#Rugby4NHS

The Slingbacks #Rugby4NHS initiative is gathering traction with support from clubs around the country providing food and snacks to hard-pressed local NHS staff.

#Rugby4NHS



Our former grounds

3: Gunnersbury Lane

After their unfair eviction from their previous ground at Gospel Oak, for the 1885/86 season Rosslyn Park FC moved to share the ground of West Middlesex Cricket Club in Gunnersbury Lane, Acton. The site has been developed since, but it was to the left of the road about half way between Acton Town station and the High Street. The rent was £20 for the season. An Ordnance Survey map from that time shows a pavilion at the ground, but the club hired a room for changing at the George & Dragon pub, which still stands at 183 High Street.

The decade that Rosslyn Park spent here is worth looking at in some detail as it saw the Club transformed into one of the best teams in the country. It did not look that way at the end of the first season 1885-86, with only three games won and an embarrassing nine successive matches lost without even scoring! There were a couple of innovations that season worth mentioning. For the first time all matches had a referee and two umpires (later to become touch judges) rather than the skippers resolving disputes, and referees were equipped with a whistle for the first time!

The 1886-87 season brought another innovation, with matches decided by points rather than by goals (3 points for a goal, one for a try). It also saw the Club's fortunes turned around, winning each of their first six matches. Thirty new members signed up, but the two key ones were H C L Tindall and the Scottish International G C Lindsay, who formed a formidable centre partnership. Tindall, known informally by his third forename, Lennox, was a superb athlete (for Cambridge University) and a county cricketer as well as a gifted Rugby player. He could run in tries from anywhere, including two 'hat-tricks' in the first four matches that season. As a first-class cricketer, he had played for Kent from 1893 to 1895, playing alongside W G Grace for South of England at the age of 20 when they beat the Australian touring team in 1893. As an athlete, in 1889, whilst a Committee-member of Rosslyn Park, he won the AAA Championships 440 Yards race in a World Record 48.5 seconds, a time not bettered by an English athlete until 1911.

For the following 1887-88 season among the new recruits was the Scottish International Darsie Anderson. London Welsh appeared on the fixture list for the first time. Only four matches were lost all season. The greatest individual feat was performed by the formidable Lennox Tindall who scored a club record 7 tries and 4 goals in the match against Old Millhillians. The season saw the retirement of the only player remaining from the club's first season,

Lionel Roberts. At the AGM he was elected to be Rosslyn Park's first Vice-President. He has left us a legacy to this day: it is his copperplate script in the ledgers in the trophy cabinet that record Park's early seasons.

At the start of the 1888-89 meeting H C L Tindall was elected to the committee (on which his grandson – Simon – now sits). The Club saw the rent on the ground increased to £20, which produced a deficit in the finances. This was covered by a whip-round of the members, of whom there were 33 new ones, and subs were increased to from 10/- (50p) to 12/6 (67.5p). It was another successful season, resulting in a profit of nearly £5.

A significant recruit at the start of 1889-90 season was the man who was to become Rosslyn Park's first England International, Edgar Bonham Carter (later Sir Edgar Bonham Carter KCMG, and great-great-uncle of the actor Helena). The prestigious name of Oxford University was added to the fixture list, and there were 45 new Members with a third XV now firmly established. The penalty kick was introduced to the game, with Park recording their first score from a penalty against Old Millhillians on 21 December 1889.

The club was now going from strength to strength and 1890-91 saw Cambridge University, plus the First XV's of Blackheath and Richmond added to the fixture list. The Club also faced it's first threat of industrial action! The groundsman demanded an increase in the three shillings (15p) a week he received for preparing the pitch. The Committee decided to give him an extra sixpence (2.5p). The club had been charging for admission for the previous two seasons at a penny a time – this was increased to twopence, but ladies were still admitted free.

The 1891-92 season was a historic one for the club. Harlequins were added to the fixtures, there were 30 new members (including one H A Burlinson, whom we shall hear much of later during his 60 years with the club) and the scoring system was amended (a goal from a try 5 points, a goal from a penalty 3 points, any other goal 4 points and a try one point). Moseley were also added to the list of fixtures, but the match was cancelled due to a frozen pitch and it was several seasons later that the two clubs finally met. But the major event was the first ever international match overseas when Park visited Paris at Easter 1892 to play Stade Francaise. There was a full report on this in a previous Parknews, so we shall not repeat it here, but it was a major milestone in the history of the sport.

1892-93 saw another milestone with the club building its first 'grandstand' – actually flat boards on one side of the ground upon which some chairs were placed. The admission charge for that side of the ground was raised to sixpence (2.5p). Annual receipts exceeded £100 for the first time. Trick question for pub quiz bores: which existing London Football Club played at Stamford Bridge before Chelsea FC? Answer: Rosslyn Park FC. Park played away to Old Leysians at Stamford Bridge on 10 December 1892, almost seventeen years before Chelsea were founded. But the undoubted highlight of the season was the away match at mighty Blackheath. Park, playing with the elements, built a lead of two tries to nil (both converted). Blackheath came storming back in the second half, quickly scoring three unconverted tries and it looked all over – until Park made a super-human effort to score another converted try, greeted with polite applause. It was without doubt the club's biggest win to date and signaled our arrival among the elite.

The following 1893-94 season the points accorded to a try were increased to three. It all started very well, with 55 new members, but after Christmas it petered out badly with a string of defeats. This may have been connected with a demand from West Middlesex CC for a swingeing £10 increase in rent, just as the club had looked settled. For the third time in its brief history the club were left looking for a new ground. They found it in time for the next season in the form of Old Deer Park, but more of that in a future newsletter.

Sponsorship Opportunities

With clubs financially reeling from the Covid crisis, sponsorship has never been more important to clubs - and Rosslyn Park is certainly no exception to that rule. A very wide range of sponsorship advertising, marketing and promotional opportunities are available throughout the season with prices suitable for all budgets. These

provide a very powerful and cost effective opportunity to promote your business.

During the lock-down, Jodie Rockett, our Commercial and Sponsorship Manager, has been working on some exciting sponsorship opportunities. One of these packages is featured below. We understand that we are currently living through uncertain times, but if individuals or their businesses feel able to commit to the package at this time – your support would be significant to the Club and very much appreciated.

Supporters can play a part in this important area. Jodie has a variety of sponsorship opportunities to suit all budgets so if, your business or someone you know might be prepared to sponsor the club or any of its activities please do contact Jodie. She will be delighted to follow up on leads. Her contact details appear in the next column.

- **Email marketing & campaigns to club database throughout the year.** Database of over 3,000 members and players
- **Feature on RPFC website & full company description**
- **Social media support across all channels throughout the season.** Twitter, Instagram, Facebook & YouTube
- **Branded pitch board located around the venue** 6m x 2m board designed and produced by club for the full year
- **Table of 8 guests including 3-course meal for one home game of the season.** Home game of choice, including 3-course meal & car parking spaces
- **Hire of the club/venue free of charge.** This can include both pitch and clubhouse for one full day
Cost: £2,000 + VAT per season

For an additional £1,000 + VAT

- **Company branding on Men's 1st XV playing kit**
National exposure throughout the year

Digital Marketing

The Rosslyn Park website, database, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram all represent a large and fast growing audience with

targeted engagements. These platforms allow opportunities for companies to build bespoke and extremely cost effective packages and are a great ways to interact with our supporters and social media followers instantly. Our social media not only provides the latest Rosslyn Park tries and score lines but also highlight your companies involvement at the club.

Please contact Jodie Rockett, our Sponsorship Manager, via email: jodie.rockett@rosslynpark.co.uk or phone: [0208 876 1879](tel:02088761879) to discuss how sponsorship at Rosslyn Park may fit with your own promotional plans.

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR SPONSORS AS THEY HAVE SUPPORTED US

Keep up to date

Keep in touch with everything happening at Rosslyn Park by regularly visiting the Club's website at

www.rosslynpark.co.uk

The club is also active in several social media channels:

Twitter: <http://bit.ly/2PqDIQy>

Facebook: <http://bit.ly/2NG7bxV>

Instagram: <http://bit.ly/34d652t>

YouTube: <http://bit.ly/2PQSpqC>

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OUR ETHOS IS DEFINED BY THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THE CLOTHING WE WEAR HAS A DIRECT IMPACT ON OUR LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE IN SPORT

OUR REMIT IS TO DELIVER THE BEST POSSIBLE PRODUCT

OUR INTENT IS FUNDAMENTALLY ENGRAINED IN OUR PROCESS

LET'S PLAY!

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