

JANUARY 26

DEVON RUGBY REVIEW

What's on this month at Devon RFU?



Check out further updates here: devonrfu.co.uk/



Paul Harris (1949–2025)

Friends, family and former team-mates have been paying fond tribute to Crediton and Devon rugby stalwart Paul Harris, who has died aged 76 after a courageous battle with a rare blood disorder, A L amyloidosis.

Paul's association with Crediton RFC spanned more than six decades. A winger during the 1960s, 70s and 80s, he represented the club largely in the second and third teams and was remembered as a wholehearted trier, surprisingly quick for a big man. His playing career ended not through rugby injury, but after breaking a leg at a club summer fun day – a tale Paul relished retelling.

Injury marked the start of an extraordinary administrative career. For more than 40 years Paul served Crediton RFC in almost every capacity imaginable, including fixture secretary, chairman (1983–85, 1994–95) and president (2011–14). One of his proudest achievements was researching and writing the club's definitive 200-page history, published in 2003 for its 125th anniversary. He was awarded life membership in 2015.

At county level, Paul's contribution was equally immense. He served Devon RFU for 35 years, producing the county handbook for many seasons and becoming best known for his stewardship of the county's cup competitions and merit tables. A tireless advocate for lower-XV rugby, he believed a healthy match programme was essential to club sustainability. Devon made him a life member in 2005 and president for three years up to 2025.

Former Devon RFU president Geoff Simpson praised Paul's meticulous eye for detail, instinctive fairness and infectious sense of humour – qualities that endeared him to colleagues across the county game.

Away from rugby, Paul was a devoted family man, social historian, keen cricketer and enthusiastic baker. He is survived by his wife Hilary, children Jay and Kate, and his grandchildren – including Ben and Ollie, who continue the Harris rugby line at Crediton.

Paul's passing leaves a significant void in Devon rugby, but his legacy will endure in the clubs and competitions he served so selflessly.



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Devon RFU: Nominate Your Volunteer Hero for the RFU Volunteer of the Year Awards!

Every rugby club thrives because of the dedication, passion and sheer hard work of volunteers. Now is the time to shine a spotlight on those remarkable individuals and teams who make rugby happen across Devon!

The Volunteer of the Year Awards (part of the RFU Volunteer Recognition Programme) celebrate the extraordinary contributions made by volunteers in grassroots rugby over the

past year. Whether they've organised events, supported players, brought new people into the game, strengthened community links, or worked tirelessly behind the scenes, we want their story to be heard.

Why You Should Nominate?

- Volunteers are the heartbeat of your club — now's your chance to recognise their efforts on a national stage.
- Previous years have seen thousands of nominations and many finalists celebrated at a national event at Twickenham.
- Devon clubs have had finalists and winners in recent years — our local heroes deserve to be honoured again! Devon RFU

Categories You Can Nominate For:

While writing your nomination, think about how your volunteer has:

- Gone above and beyond in support of your club (e.g., organisation, facilities, committee roles).
- Made rugby more accessible or engaging for others.
- Helped connect your club with the wider community.

Whether it's one exceptional individual or a group of volunteers, every contribution counts.

Deadline: Friday 13th February

Nominations must be submitted by Friday 13th February — don't miss out! (Please aim to complete your club's nomination with plenty of time to spare.)

Visit the RFU site for full nomination details and to submit your form here: <https://www.englandrugby.com/follow/news-and-media/nominations-now-open-2026-volunteer-year-awards>

Let's make sure the tireless volunteers who are instrumental to rugby in Devon get the recognition they deserve.

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Devon RFU Hosts Historic First County Super Vets Match!

We're excited to announce a landmark event for Devon Rugby – our first ever County Super Vets fixture! This special match will see Devon RFU Super Vets take on Sussex RFU Super Vets in what promises to be a fantastic celebration of rugby and camaraderie.

Super Vets rugby is for players aged 50 and older.

Venue: Exmouth RFC Date: Saturday, 14th March Kick-off: 2:00 PM

This is a brilliant opportunity to support our veteran players and enjoy a great day of rugby. After the match, stick around in the Exmouth RFC Clubhouse to watch a Six Nations game live on the big screen – the perfect way to round off an afternoon of rugby action!

Interested in taking part? We'd love to hear from you! Please contact Mike via email at: devonadmin.vetl@btinternet.com

Bring your friends, family, and fellow rugby enthusiasts for what will surely be a memorable occasion. Let's make history together!

The match will raise money for the [Wooden Spoon Children's Charity](#) and there will be a bucket collection at half-time.

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Devon RFU – County Championship 2026 Fixtures Announced

The RFU has confirmed the fixtures for the 2026 County Championship, and Devon will be aiming high across all three competitions. After a fantastic 2025 season, our Senior Women will look to retain their Division Two title, while the Senior Men and Under 20s squads are determined to bring home their own championships.

Under 20s Championship

Our talented Under 20s side kicks off their campaign with two key fixtures:

- **Sunday 22 February 2026 – Away to Cornwall**
- **Sunday 15 March 2026 – Home to Somerset**

These matches will be crucial as we look to build on last season's progress and challenge for the title.

Senior Men – Division Two

The Senior Men's team faces a competitive group stage with three fixtures:

- **Saturday 9 May 2026 – Away to Buckinghamshire**
- **Saturday 16 May 2026 – Home to Somerset**
- **Saturday 23 May 2026 – Home to Gloucestershire**

With home advantage in two of the three games, the squad will be pushing hard to secure a place in the knockout stages and claim the Division Two crown.

Senior Women – Division Two

Our reigning champions begin their title defence with:

- **Sunday 10 May 2026 – Away to Berkshire**
- **Sunday 24 May 2026 – Home to Cornwall**

The team will be looking to replicate last year's success and make Devon proud once again.

Venues for home fixtures will be confirmed soon, so keep an eye on our website and social channels for updates. Let's get behind all our teams as they strive for County Championship glory in 2026!

Eyeing Redemption: Devon Hosts Cornwall in the 2026 Tamar Cup at Plymouth Albion Mark your calendars for Saturday, April 4, 2026, when Devon welcomes Cornwall to The Brickfields—home of Plymouth Albion—for what promises to be a classic showdown. After a narrow loss to Cornwall at Redruth in 2025, our squad is fired up to reclaim the Tamar Cup and bring the trophy back across the Tamar.

A Storied Rivalry

- The Tamar Cup, inaugurated in 1982, was conceived by then-Chief Constable David East of the Devon & Cornwall Police.
- Cornwall holds the recent edge, claiming victory in 2025 with a 22–14 win at Redruth.

Cornwall have triumphed 19 times, while Devon have been crowned champions 8 times.

What This Match Means

- For Devon, 2026 presents the perfect opportunity to right last year's wrong and reignite the competitive fire within the squad.
- Hosted at The Brickfields, a familiar venue for both counties, the stage is set for a fiercely contested clash.
- With momentum, home support, and a point to prove, Devon will be aiming to swing the balance in their favour.

Looking Beyond the Scoreboard

- Beyond silverware, this fixture plays a strategic role—sharpening our players ahead of the Bill Beaumont Championship campaign.
- It also strengthens morale county-wide, bringing community and supporters together in vibrant rivalry and camaraderie.

Let's rally support for April 4, 2026 at Plymouth Albion—bring your flags, voices, and spirit. Together, Devon can turn back the tide and bring the Tamar Cup home.

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Devon RFU County Cup Competitions – Finals Update (Date Order)

As the 2025–26 season progresses, attention is turning to the Devon RFU County Cup finals, with clubs from across the county set to compete for honours. Below is the current schedule of finals listed in date order. Please note that these dates remain subject to change should league fixtures need to be rearranged.

County Cup Finals Schedule

- Senior Shield Final Tiverton v Topsham Friday 23 January 2026
- Intermediate Cup Final Barnstaple Seconds v Okehampton Saturday 7 February 2026
- Intermediate Plate Final Newton Abbot v Cullompton Sunday 8 February 2026
- Second Team Shield Final Exmouth v Paignton Saturday 21 February 2026
- Senior Cup Final Brixham v Exmouth Saturday 14 March 2026
- Second Team Cup Final Devonport Services v Topsham Saturday 14 March 2026
- Junior Competitions – Dates to Be Announced
- Devon Junior Cup Final Exeter Saracens v Withycombe
- Devon Junior Bowl Final New Cross v Totnes / Plymouth Argam / OPM's (Finalist to be confirmed following the outstanding semi-final.)

Further information, including venues and kick-off times, will be shared once confirmed. We wish all teams the very best as they prepare for their respective finals and look forward to a fantastic showcase of rugby across Devon.

Help Us Tell the Story of 150 Years of Devon Rugby

In 2025, Devon RFU proudly celebrates 150 years of rugby history, and we are currently undertaking a special project to collate and preserve the stories, memories, and moments that have shaped rugby across the county.

We know that the true history of Devon rugby lives within its clubs and its people. From memorable matches and tours to clubhouse moments, team photos, and personal achievements, we would love to hear from players, volunteers, officials, and supporters—past and present.

If your club has:

- Old photographs (teams, matches, social events, or grounds)
- Personal stories or anecdotes
- Scrapbooks, programmes, or memorabilia
- Notable achievements or milestones
- Memories of players, coaches, or characters who helped shape your club

...we would be delighted to include them as part of our 150-year history.

Every contribution, big or small, helps us build a richer picture of Devon rugby's heritage and ensures these stories are preserved for future generations.

If you have any information, photos, or stories to share, please contact Jo at: devon150@devonrfu.com

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Supporting the Transition from Colts to Senior Rugby

One of the most challenging steps in a player's rugby journey is the transition from Colts rugby into the senior game. For many young players, this period can determine whether they continue playing rugby long-term or drift away from the sport. Devon RFU is committed to supporting clubs and players through this crucial phase, and one of the key initiatives helping to bridge the gap is the introduction of Transition Festivals.

Transition Festivals are designed to provide a safe, enjoyable, and development-focused environment for players who are moving out of Colts rugby. These events allow Senior Colts to play alongside and against other players under the age of 23, helping to reduce the physical and cultural jump into open-age senior rugby while still maintaining a competitive edge.

By bringing together players of a similar age and stage of development, Transition Festivals encourage confidence, game understanding, and continued engagement. They also give clubs the opportunity to retain young players, integrate them gradually into senior squads, and strengthen their future player pathways.

A great example of this approach in action will take place at Tavistock RFC, who are hosting a 10-a-side Transition Festival tournament on Saturday 4 April. The shorter format and festival atmosphere are ideal for promoting fast, exciting rugby while prioritising player welfare and enjoyment. Events like this are not just about competition—they are about connection, confidence, and continuity.

Clubs interested in entering the Tavistock event or seeking further details can contact **Mhairi McCall** via secretary@tavistockrfc.co.uk.

Devon RFU is keen to see more clubs explore this model and run similar events across the county. Transition Festivals can be adapted to suit local needs and facilities, and support is available to help clubs get started. If your club would be interested in hosting or learning more about running a Transition Festival, please contact **Chris Forster** at cups@devonrfu.com for further information.

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Focus on Walking Rugby

Walking Rugby continues to grow in popularity across Devon, offering an inclusive and enjoyable way for people to stay involved in the game they love — or to discover rugby for the very first time.

Designed to be low-impact and accessible, Walking Rugby is perfect for players who may have stepped away from the game due to age, injury, or other commitments, but still want to enjoy the social, physical, and mental benefits that rugby provides. With no running, no contact, and modified laws, it allows players to stay active, improve mobility, and maintain fitness in a safe and supportive environment.

One of the biggest strengths of Walking Rugby is its sense of community. Sessions are relaxed, sociable, and welcoming, making them ideal for anyone looking to stay connected to their club, meet new people, and continue to be part of the rugby family. Many participants highlight not just the physical benefits, but the positive impact on wellbeing, confidence, and mental health.

Walking Rugby truly reflects the ethos of rugby for all. Whether you are a former player, a referee, a volunteer, or someone completely new to the sport, there is a place for you in the game.

If you are interested in finding a Walking Rugby session near you, or would like to get involved, please visit the [Walking Rugby section](#) of the Devon RFU website, where you'll find information and contact details for clubs currently offering sessions.

For clubs who are not yet running Walking Rugby but would like to set up a team, or for those interested in hosting or taking part in a Walking Rugby Festival, support is available. Please contact Devon RFU's Director of the **Male Game**, **Chris Forster**, via cups@devonrfu.com for more information.

Walking Rugby is about staying in the game — whatever stage of life you're at. Why not take the next step and get involved?

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