

DEVON RUGBY

Devon RFU Welcomes Paladin Sports as Official Kit

Devon RFU has appointed Paladin Sports as its Official Representative Rugby Kit Partner for the next three years, bringing a fresh new look to our representative teams and supporters.

More info on Page 3.

Devon RFU Honours Two Rugby Legends

Devon RFU is proud to honour two outstanding servants of the game by renaming the Merit League and Hardship Fund in recognition of their lasting contribution to rugby across the county.

More info on Page 4.

South West Mutual Benefit Fund Launches New Website Ahead of the New Season

The South West Mutual Benefit Fund has launched a new website and modernised its administration, making it easier than ever for clubs and players to access valuable financial support in the event of injury or illness.

See page 2 for more Info.

England Rugby Learning Launches for the Community Game

England Rugby Learning is the RFU's new digital learning platform, making it easier for coaches, match officials and volunteers to access training, manage qualifications and continue their development throughout their rugby journey.

See page 3 for more Info.



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Devon RFU



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01

Set Up By Players, For Players

Founded in Plymouth in 1930 by the late Tom Lean — a fund set up by South West players, for South West players.

02

Not-For-Profit By Design

We're not here to make a profit — only to give county and club players the financial confidence to play.

03

Costs Held For Over 15 Years

Thanks to careful management, membership costs have not increased in over 15 years.

04

Modernised, Electronic Claims

In the past year we've modernised our processes: claims and payments are now completed electronically, saving time and reducing costs.

WHY THE FUND

The Financial Confidence To Play.

Now, more than ever, it matters to feel financially secure when choosing to play the game that gives us so much: teamwork, friendship, support, an outlet for competitive spirit, and so much more.

South West Mutual Benefit Fund Launches New Website Ahead of the New Season

As clubs prepare for the 2026/27 season, Devon RFU is encouraging every club to take a fresh look at the South West Mutual Benefit Fund (SWMBF) following a major programme of modernisation.

Under the leadership of new Secretary and Treasurer Andy Pidwell, the Fund has introduced updated online administration processes alongside the launch of a brand-new website, making it simpler than ever for clubs to access information and manage membership.

The South West Mutual Benefit Fund has been supporting rugby players across the

region for many years, providing financial assistance when injury or illness prevents members from working. For self-employed players in particular, the scheme can provide valuable peace of mind, helping to reduce the financial impact of time away from work following a rugby injury.

By offering this additional layer of financial security, the Fund can also play an important role in encouraging participation and supporting player retention across the community game.

Devon RFU encourages all member clubs to explore the benefits available and consider

whether the scheme could support their players during the coming season.

For more information, visit: www.swmbf.co.uk

Devon Deaf Rugby Community Day

Sunday 13th September 2026, 2pm – 4pm
Location: Exeter Athletic RFC Bravelands, Oil Mill Lane, Clyst St Mary, Exeter, EX5 1AF

Devon Deaf Rugby is hosting a Community Day to introduce deaf and hard of hearing children to the exciting world of Deaf

rugby. Open to young people aged 6–16, the event provides a fun, welcoming and inclusive opportunity to try rugby, meet members of the Devon Deaf Rugby team and discover how the game can be adapted to ensure everyone can take part. The event is supported by England Deaf Rugby

and Devon RFU, and everyone is welcome, whether you're new to rugby or already playing the game.

To find out more or register your interest, contact **Mark Long** on **07824 318030** or email markz1973@icloud.com

Devon RFU Welcomes Paladin Sports as Official Kit Partner

Devon RFU is delighted to announce Paladin Sports as our Official Representative Rugby Kit Partner for the next three years.

Following a competitive tender process, Paladin was selected for its commitment to quality, innovation, customer service and partnership. The agreement will see Paladin supply bespoke playing, training and leisure wear for Devon RFU's representative teams, coaches and volunteers through to June 2029.

The partnership marks an exciting new chapter for representative rugby in Devon. Working together, Devon RFU and Paladin will develop a distinctive range of high-performance kit that reflects the pride and heritage of representing our county. The collaboration will also see the launch of an official online store, making Devon Rugby merchandise more accessible to players, supporters and the wider rugby community.

Simon Fuller, Chair of Devon RFU, said:

“We are delighted to welcome Paladin Sports as our Official Kit Partner. This partnership is about much more than supplying shirts. It is about creating an identity that our players, coaches, volunteers and supporters can be proud of, whilst working together to raise the profile of Devon Rugby for many years to come.”

Over the coming months, supporters can look forward to the unveiling of the new representative playing kit, together with an expanded range of official supporter clothing and merchandise.

Devon RFU would like to thank all the suppliers who participated in the tender process for their professionalism and the high quality of their submissions, and we look forward to a successful partnership with Paladin Sports.



England Rugby Learning Launches for the Community Game.

The RFU has launched England Rugby Learning, a new digital platform designed to make learning, development and qualifications easier to access for everyone involved in community rugby.

Replacing the existing course booking process within GMS, England Rugby Learning brings together coaching, officiating and volunteer development into a single, modern platform that is mobile-friendly, personalised and easier to navigate. The new system has been developed following extensive consultation with the community game and was successfully tested by coaches and Club Coach Coordinators from clubs across England before its launch.

The platform offers:

- Personalised learning pathways based on your role and experience.
- Mobile-first access, allowing learning to be completed anytime, anywhere.
- Easier access to qualifications, learning resources and development opportunities.
- Automatic recording of learning and qualifications, with integration into GMS.
- Learning communities where volunteers can share ideas, experiences and best practice.
- Free essential learning modules, including areas such as safeguarding and player welfare.

As part of the launch, learning records

will begin appearing within members' GMS profiles and will continue to evolve as further functionality is introduced. The new platform will become the central hub for learning across the game, helping clubs better understand the qualifications and development of their coaches and volunteers while reducing administration.

Devon RFU encourages all coaches, match officials and volunteers to explore England Rugby Learning and take advantage of the wide range of learning opportunities available as we prepare for the 2026/27 season. Continued learning and development are essential to creating safe, enjoyable and rewarding rugby experiences for everyone involved in the game.

Devon RFU Honours Two Rugby Legends

Devon RFU is delighted to announce that two longstanding Devon rugby volunteers will be recognised through the renaming of two important county initiatives in honour of their outstanding service to the game.

From the 2026/27 season, the Devon Merit League will become the Paul Harris League, recognising Paul’s unwavering commitment to community rugby and his tireless work in supporting clubs and developing playing opportunities across the county. His dedication to the grassroots game has had a lasting impact on countless players, volunteers and clubs throughout Devon.

In addition, the Devon RFU Hardship Fund will be renamed the Treve Mitchell Hardship Fund, acknowledging Treve’s lifelong passion for ensuring rugby is accessible to everyone. Through

his commitment to age-grade rugby and his belief that financial circumstances should never be a barrier to participation, Treve has helped generations of young players enjoy and remain involved in our sport.

Both Paul and Treve have made an immeasurable contribution to Devon Rugby over many years. By naming these initiatives in their honour, Devon RFU hopes to ensure their legacy continues to inspire future generations while recognising the values of inclusion, opportunity and community that they have championed throughout their involvement in the game.

On behalf of everyone across the county, Devon RFU extends its sincere thanks to Paul and Treve for their remarkable service and dedication to rugby in Devon.

New Book Celebrates Devon’s Early England Rugby Heroes

A fascinating new book exploring the lives of England’s first international rugby players highlights the remarkable stories of several players with strong Devon connections, offering a unique insight into the county’s rich rugby heritage.

The Lives of England Rugby Players 1871–1899, by journalist Phil Hill, tells the stories of all 337 men who represented England during the nineteenth century, revealing not only their achievements on the rugby field but also their extraordinary lives beyond the game. Among those featured are several Devon rugby pioneers, including Charlie Matters, whose father’s return from America during the Civil War led to his own rugby journey; Barnstaple’s “Nobby” Thomas, whose England career was cut short despite a promising start; Sir Charles Harper, who went on to enjoy a distinguished military career; William Ashford, who famously played under an assumed name to avoid his mother’s ban on rugby; and Tiverton’s Arthur Roberts St Leger Fegan, who represented England after his brother had previously played for Ireland.

The book is packed with remarkable stories, from war heroes, explorers and clergy to tales of tragedy, adventure and famous historical figures, bringing to life the personalities behind England’s earliest internationals.

For anyone interested in rugby history or Devon’s proud contribution to the game, The Lives of England Rugby Players 1871–1899 is available now in hardback from Amazon, priced at £14.95.

The publication also serves as a timely reminder of Devon’s own rich rugby heritage. Later this year, Devon RFU will publish The History of Rugby Union in Devon, a comprehensive account of the county’s rugby story, researched and written by David Maddick and

Paul Harris. Their years of dedication and meticulous research have created what promises to become the definitive history of rugby union in Devon, and we look forward to sharing more details with the rugby community in the coming months.



RFU Launches Landmark Anti-Sexism and Misogyny Policy

The RFU has launched a new Anti-Sexism and Misogyny Policy, reinforcing its commitment to ensuring rugby is a safe, welcoming and inclusive sport for women and girls at every level of the game.

Developed in partnership with Women in Sport, the policy is supported by practical guidance and resources to help clubs recognise, challenge and prevent sexist and misogynistic behaviour. It aims to support clubs in creating positive cultures where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, whether they are players, coaches, match officials, volunteers or supporters.

The new toolkit includes advice on recognising unacceptable behaviour, promoting positive allyship, responding appropriately to incidents and embedding inclusive behaviours throughout club life. The guidance is intended to help clubs build environments where everyone can enjoy rugby and reach their full potential.

Devon RFU fully supports this important initiative and encourages all clubs to review the new policy and toolkit as they prepare for the 2026/27 season. By working together, we can ensure rugby remains a game where everyone feels respected, valued and able to belong. For more information please go to [RFU launches landmark anti-sexism and misogyny policy](#) | Rugby Football

RFU Publishes New Age Grade Regulation 15

The RFU has published the final version of Age Grade Regulation 15 for the 2026/27 season, setting out the regulations that govern age-grade rugby across England.

Regulation 15 provides the framework for delivering safe, enjoyable and player-centred rugby for children and young people. It covers key areas including age-banding, player welfare, playing out of age grade, season structure, match activity and the application of the Half Game Rule, ensuring that young players can develop in an appropriate and supportive environment.

Devon RFU encourages all clubs, coaches, team managers and volunteers involved in the age-grade game to review the updated regulation and ensure they are familiar with any changes ahead of the new season.

The full Regulation 15 document and supporting guidance are available on the England Rugby website:

<https://www.englandrugby.com/run/rules-governance/rfu-rules-and-regulations/regulation-15-age-grade-rugby>

Jackie Coles Appointed Director of Age-Grade Rugby



Devon RFU is delighted to announce the appointment of Jackie Coles as our new Director of Age-Grade Rugby.

Jackie brings a wealth of experience in age-grade rugby, having begun her journey as a rugby parent at Torquay Athletic RFC before taking on a range of volunteer leadership roles within the club. Her passion for supporting young players, clubs and volunteers has made her a highly respected figure within the Devon rugby community.

In her new role, Jackie will provide strategic leadership for age-grade rugby across the county, working closely with clubs, schools, colleges and volunteers to strengthen player pathways, support participation and ensure young players continue to enjoy safe, inclusive and rewarding rugby experiences.

Everyone at Devon RFU extends a warm welcome to Jackie and looks forward to working with her as we continue to develop and grow age-grade rugby throughout Devon.



Devon RFU Welcomes Three New Life Members

Devon RFU is proud to announce the appointment of **Terry O'Brien, Carol Mitchell and Hilary Harris** as Life Members, recognising their exceptional commitment and service to rugby in Devon.

Terry O'Brien has given many years of dedicated service to the game, both as Devon RFU's former League Secretary and through his longstanding involvement with Sidmouth RFC. His commitment to the organisation and development of community rugby has made a lasting

contribution to clubs across the county.

Carol Mitchell and Hilary Harris have each played an invaluable role in supporting Devon Rugby over many years. Alongside the unwavering support they have given to their husbands' extensive contributions to the game, both Carol and Hilary have become integral members of the Devon representative rugby family, providing invaluable support to players, coaches and management teams both on and off the field.

Life Membership is one of the highest honours Devon RFU can bestow, recognising individuals whose outstanding dedication has made a significant and lasting impact on rugby in Devon.

Congratulations to Terry, Carol and Hilary on this well-deserved recognition, and thank you for your continued commitment to our game.

Spotlight On Ocean City Rugby

We are a **NON CONTACT TAG RUGBY** club in Plymouth For children 5 yrs and upwards with SEN, Autism, ADHD, and Neurodivergent both Boys and Girls.

Our aim is to help players gain confidence, self esteem, increase communication and listening skills. Developing coordination whilst exercising, developing social skills and having lots of fun in a safe space.

Since our launch on Sunday 15th June 2025 by Steve (hoops) Hooper The then Captain of 2025 Invictus Games, we have had a lot of interest in what we are doing and have had players coming and trying out our regular Fun Training sessions.

In the summer Holidays (2025) we held a Summer Camp which was well attended and allot of interested was generated.

Our season starts from September to July on Sundays 10am-11am at Weston Mill Oaks Villa/ Old Technicians RFC Ferndale Rd, Plymouth, PL2 2EL In our sessions We have games set up, obstacle course, foot work passing and team building, parachute runs, kicking practice who can kick the furthest? Some tag games, "Fishy fishy fishy come swim in my sea Sharky Sharky sharky you can't catch me " We also have our own **HAKA** that we finish the session off with. Lots of fun and laughter was had by both parents and carers who join in the sessions too.

At Christmas we had a Christmas social at our local bowling ally with food it was great to see the players bonding and parents chatting whilst they all played.

We had a stand at Argyle Women's and Girls in Sport event in February promoting the club and handing out leaflets with interest generated and recently we had a stand at Janner Aid '26 in support of Plymouth Football Boot Bank (26th July) lots of leaflets handed out and some interest in the club was generated, 2 of our players helped out all day so proud of them.

Our very first Club Presentation was held on Sunday 19th July with trophies given out to our players and a thank you to our treasurer for all her support and a thank you tankard for our coach, it was a great way to end the season.

We now have 2 new players so now have 4 regular players we're getting there and we are looking to introduce a certificate for volunteering skills (Active Devon) for our 2 oldest players.

Our next event is our 1st Anniversary Fun session on 9th August 10-12am at Weston Mill Oak Villa invites have been sent out as well as advertising it on our Facebook page.

I am currently working with Hayley Knight of Active Devon to progress the club and she's been helping with possible funding and contacts as well as workshops to attend.

By Julia Taylor.

