

THE ANCHOR 2026



Estd. 1926

**The Anchorians
Association
Annual Report, 2025-26**

Officers of the Association, 2025-26

Life Vice-Presidents

D W Howard, MA

Miss L McIntosh G M Pike

Chairman

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Hon. Treasurer

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Anchorians Association

Affiliated Sports Clubs' Representatives

Gillingham Anchorians
RFC: **John Wright**

Gillingham Anchorians
HC: **Trevor Shave**

Anchorians FC: **Paul
MacDonald**

Past Officers of the Association

President	Chairman/Chairwoman	Hon. Secretary	Hon. Treasurer
H C Barnard (1927-37)	L Roberts (1927-28)	D G Lambert (1927)	D G Lambert (1927)
S J Dale (1938-56)	H Cloke (1929-30)	L B Williams (1927)	A G Willis (1927-77)
C W E Bacon (1957-62)	W F Spinks (1931-38)	R F G Wellard (1928-29)	J D Hunt (1978-95)
J Hicks (1963-87)	P J Beacon (1939)	L N W Johnson (1930-31)	S M Cook (1996-98)
A G Jarrett (1988-96)	P W Davenport (1947-50)	P W Davenport (1932-39)	N E Cripps (2001-06)
M P Barry (1997-2001)	A T J Harrington, DSC (1951-52)	S G Dempster (1947-52)	G M Pike (2007-14)
D W Smith (2002-03)	S G Dempster (1953)	L S Phillips (1953-66)	Mrs R Evans (2015)
Hon. P Morris (2004-19)	D T Pilcher (1954-55)	C A Booth (1967-68)	R J Bursey (2016-18)
	K MacFarlane (1956-58)	M K Batchelor (1969)	L J Willis (2019-21)
	G E Palmer (1959-61)	L S Phillips (1970-2009)	P Conroy (2022-)
	J A Welch (1962-64)	Miss L McIntosh (2009-15)	
	E C Gorf (1965-67)	N G Fray (2015-)	
	G R Barton (1968-70)		
	K C Taylor (1971-87)		
	D W Howard (1988-97)		
	M V Dean (1998-2000)		
	A J Younger (2001-02)		
	J Clutton (2003-04)		
	Miss A D Bishop (2005-10)		
	N G Fray (2010-15)		
	L J Willis (2015-)		

A brief history of the Anchorians Association

The Anchorians Association is fast approaching its centenary, which it will celebrate in 2026-27. It was formed on Boxing Day, 1926 by a group of 30 former pupils and members of staff of the old Gillingham County (later to become, Grammar) School in Third Avenue, Gillingham. The School merged with Rainham Secondary Boys' School in 1975 and moved to its Derwent Way site, to form The Howard School. The new School's Board of Governors approved the adoption of the Anchorians Association as a 'ready-made' Old Boys' organisation.

To cement that link, the Howard School badge includes an anchor (the Grammar School's motto was '*Valet Anchora Virtus*' – virtue [moral excellence] is our anchor) and the colour, purple – both the Association's and Grammar School's emblems and colours.

Officers of Affiliated Sports Clubs, 2025-26

Gillingham Anchorians Rugby Football Club

Chairman: Nick Turner

Gillingham Anchorians Hockey Club

Chairman: Trevor Shave

Anchorians Football Club

Chairman: Leigh Willis

Editor, *The Anchor*: Nigel Fray

Cover photograph by Continental Tyres TV / England Rugby

Association Chairman's Report



Welcome to this year's edition of 'The Anchor', as we reflect on the 99th season of the Anchorians Association and its fast-approaching centenary.

Reaching 100 years is an incredible milestone. To still be here a century on is a fantastic achievement and one we should all be extremely proud of. It reflects the strength, commitment, and spirit of this club and its community over many generations.

Throughout the coming year, we will be marking this milestone with a number of events for our members, ensuring it is a truly memorable year for everyone connected with the club.

I thank everyone, past and present, who has been involved with the Association and our affiliated sports clubs. Without your dedication, hard work, and ongoing support—both in terms of volunteering and financial backing—we simply would not be where we are today. Nor should we forget those who are no longer with us, but who gave so much of their time and effort to help build our Club into what it is today.

I'd also like to make special mention of our Honorary Secretary, Nigel Fray, who has been working over the past couple of years on a commemorative book celebrating 100 years of the Association. This is now available for our members – and others! – to purchase (more details below).

This has clearly been a real passion project for Nigel, but it has also required a huge amount of time, effort, and perseverance to gather and piece together as much of our history as possible. It's a fantastic contribution and a lasting legacy for future generations.

Nigel, on behalf of everyone, a huge thank you for everything you've put into this.

Over the past year, we've gone through some significant changes. Steve Williamson, after 10 years having served the Association, had to step back due to health issues. I thank Steve for all his hard work and dedication to the Association over this time and hope his recovery continues to go on the right

path. We've been incredibly fortunate to have Ella Green, Rob Wigston & Kelvin McRae step in, managing the facility during Steve's absence, and now with Ella & Rob taking on the roles of Bar and Facilities Managers full-time. They've done a terrific job, building on the strong foundations Steve put in place over the last decade, and creating an even more welcoming environment for our members to enjoy, with their family & friends.

Beyond that, this year has had its share of challenges, especially with maintaining or replacing aging equipment—new ice machine, fridges, dishwashers, plumbing problems, water issues. We've tackled it all.

We've also been dealing with an incorrect business rates valuation by Medway Council over the past few years, which significantly increased our costs due to the incorrect addition of the Council's 3G pitch and changing rooms onto the Association's premises. Huge thanks to Nigel, Trevor Shave, and Jess Neale for working to resolve this (more details in the Financial Report, below).

On a positive note, we've been fortunate to secure funding from the FA for green initiatives, including solar panels and other energy-saving measures, that all being well, will be implemented over the coming season. We are in the process of securing funding to replace and improve the lighting around the outside of the building, which will benefit the lighting in the compound of the clubhouse. This funding has come from Medway Council's Small Business Shopfront Grant.



We've also updated the Phillips Lounge, which was last fully refurbished almost 15 years ago. It now has a fresher, more modern look (see photograph), as well as adding a brand-new TV—which I'm sure you've all noticed, given its size! We've improved the areas behind bars in the Phillips Lounge and in the Jezzard Hall, including better shelving and display for the optics.

We now have installed dartboards in the Jezzard Hall, which many of you will have seen. We're hopeful this will lead to the

formation of a darts team within the next season, adding another great offering and becoming a new part of the Anchorians Association family.

Another big addition will be the affiliated clubs' shop, as you may have seen, this is in the entrance to the clubhouse, utilizing an area that was previously dormant. That should hopefully be completed in the next month, and it will be a big benefit to our clubs, allowing them to display their respective kits and merchandise, raise awareness of their individual clubs, and bring more people into the Clubhouse. Hopefully, that will encourage even more use of the facilities.

On the financial front, we've taken action to minimise our costs, making savings where we can. We switched to a fully digital phone system, which has saved us monthly costs, and we renegotiated our energy contracts, significantly reducing our bills, which had crept up over the last couple of years.

On the field, it's been another very positive season for our affiliated clubs. In particular, the Football Club has performed exceptionally well, with six teams reaching cup finals and three bringing home trophies. Meanwhile, the Rugby Club's youth Colts had an outstanding campaign, achieving a league and cup double—a fantastic accomplishment.

Finally, a huge thank you to all our volunteers—on the Association and in our affiliated clubs. Without your dedication, we wouldn't be able to offer these opportunities or the fantastic facilities to our community. We always need more support and are grateful to those who rolled up their sleeves at the recent maintenance/DIY days, to refresh our facilities both within the Clubhouse and outside in the compound for the new season.

See you all soon at Anchorians!

Leigh Willis
Chairman, The Anchorians Association

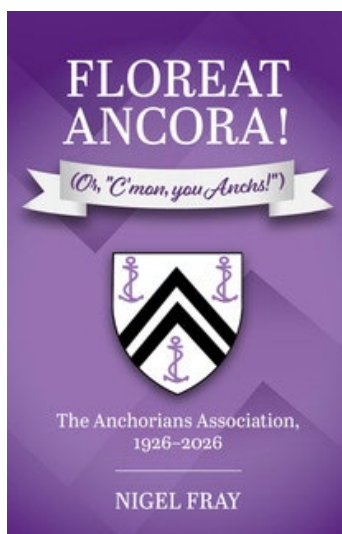
The Association's Centenary

The coming season, 2026-27 marks the centenary of the Anchorians Association, marked by several event to mar the occasion. We hope during the season to hold

a 'Fun Day', where all the Association's affiliated sports clubs can join together for a day of activities and socialising.

We will also hold a Club-wide Centenary Celebration evening at the Clubhouse on 7th November 2026 to which the Association has invited representatives of all our three clubs and local dignitaries, including the Mayor of Medway, Cllr Douglas Hamandishe and Ms Naushabah Kahn, MP for Gillingham & Rainham. This event will be a pre-cursor to the Association's actual 100th birthday on Boxing Day 2026, when the Clubhouse will be open for a Reunion of all our members – past and present, and which we hope will be very well attended.

Finally, a book, written by the Association's Honorary Secretary, Nigel Fray, celebrating the past 100 years of the Association. *Floreat Ancora! (Or, "C'mon, you Anchs!")*: The Anchorians Association – 1926-2026 is now available for purchase online from Amazon and Waterstone's.



The book is the official and definitive history of the Anchorians Association, chronicling its remarkable journey from its original formation and purpose as an 'Old Boys' organisation of the former Gillingham County Grammar School and latterly, The Howard School to, what is today, a vibrant, open and inclusive community asset.

Drawing from extensive archival material, official records, members' personal recollections – as well as a few visits to the Medway Council Archive Centre in Strood, *Floreat Ancora!* reflects both how the Association has evolved, including through organisational change while maintaining its purpose of creating and maintaining friendship, primarily through sport.

A chapter of the book is devoted to honouring those 65 Old Anchorians who lost their lives during the Second World War and whose names appear on the Association's War Memorial. After much research we now have at least some information of how all 65 each, courageously, met their fate. It also tells the story of the Association's long and often frustrating search after the War to find a suitable and convenient location to establish a permanent home, which was

achieved firstly at Featherby Road and since 1984, at our current Clubhouse in Darland Avenue.

Priced at £14.99, and reflecting that the Association remains, as it has always been, a not-for-profit organisation run by volunteers, all proceeds from the sale of the book, after publishing and online retailer costs, will go to the Association.

State of the Association

i. Membership

The Anchorians Association is an unincorporated, not-for-profit private membership organisation, which supports three affiliated sports clubs (Gillingham Anchorians RFC, Gillingham Anchorians HC, and Anchorians FC).

The Association owns its Clubhouse (incorporating two social spaces, The Phillips Lounge Bar and The Jezzard Hall, and male & female changing rooms) on land leased from Medway Council.

All affiliated sports clubs and their playing members are, first and foremost, members of the Anchorians Association and are committed to pay an Association subscription; for individuals, not only when they are fit, but also, if injured and are using the Clubhouse. This applies equally to non-playing members.

Membership of the Association is available through its affiliates and is open to all in the local community – and of course, given the Association’s history, current and former Howard School students are especially welcome.

Annual subscriptions and the affiliated clubs’ facilities fees are invested into the Clubhouse to ensure that, after accounting for running costs and other

exceptional expenditure, it continues to be well-maintained and a safe, functional, attractive and hospitable 'home' and social space for all of us.

The overall membership number remains strong, although with slightly fewer members than in recent years. Total membership of the Association as at end-2025-26 stood at 1,552 (1,666 in 2024-25), of which:

- Gillingham Anchorians RFC: 333 **(of which 246 youth / minis)** (347 in 2024-25); also 62 non-playing (Vets / Supporters' Club) members.
- Gillingham Anchorians HC: 190 **(of which 70 youth)** (195 in 2024-25)
- Anchorians FC: 1,029 **(of which 824 youth)** (1,124 in 2024-25)

Annual Subscriptions: The Association's annual membership subscription, effective from 2026-27, ratified at the 2026 AGM, is **£50** (this includes families with children, 18 years old and under). The affiliated sports clubs' annual Facilities Fee remains at **£2,500** for each club.

ii. The Anchorians Association, its affiliated sports clubs, and you!

As the Anchorians Association approaches its centenary, many members remain unaware of the vital role it plays to enable us who turn up each week to play or watch our favoured sport and socialise with our friends – many of whom we have known since school.

Put simply, without the Association, there would be no Anchorians Rugby, Hockey, or Football clubs – and almost certainly, no clubhouse for us to call 'home'. Indeed, this is why every member of an affiliated club is a member of the Association. We are first and foremost, 'Anchorians'!

We are fortunate that our predecessors had the foresight to raise funds to build a clubhouse – the first opening in 1964 at the bottom of Featherby Road, before moving 20 years later to our current location in Darland Avenue. The Association is among a very small cohort across Kent to have three sports (Rugby, Hockey, and Football) which operate from the same site and share the same clubhouse

and the adjacent pitches to play on. The fact, therefore, that all our clubs in the Anchorians 'family' have the use of such a facility (which from the outset has included designated and separate female changing rooms) is something to be proud of.

Indeed, none of the Anchs clubs can exist in isolation and therefore the future of all three is inextricably linked and dependent on the continued wellbeing of the Association. Equally, without our affiliated clubs, there would likely be no Association.

Run, as it always has been, by volunteers, we all have a part to play in looking after our Clubhouse regardless of whether you're a General Committee member, a member of your affiliated club's committee or a playing / non-playing member. After all, it's all our annual subscriptions (which equate to less than £1 per week only – a bargain!) and what we spend over the bar which go towards its upkeep.

So, please, help us to help you. The Committee will of course do its best to ensure that the Clubhouse is kept clean and well-maintained. However, if you see some litter in the clubhouse or within the compound, pick it up and put it in the bin. If your changing rooms need sweeping, seize the initiative and grab a broom! If, for post-match meals, you need more tables and chairs, get them out of the store cupboard yourselves (and put them back afterwards!).

This is your Clubhouse; you pay for its upkeep through your annual subscriptions. This is our 'home'. We have a great facility of which we're sure many other sports clubs in Kent are envious. Let's keep it that way.

iii. Financial Report and Accounts for the Year ending April 2026

The Association has this past year faced significantly challenging financial headwinds, brought about by increasing cost pressures and Government-imposed obligations, i.e. an increase in the National Living Wage and employers' National Insurance Contributions.

These challenges were further amplified by Medway Council incorrectly attributing to the Association for Business Rates purposes its new 3G pitch and accompanying changing rooms. This error resulted in the Association paying a

much higher sum than would otherwise have been the case, and adding ‘insult to injury’, due to the Council having already withdrawn from the Association its 100 per cent discretionary Business Rates relief.

At the time of the last Business Rates valuation in 2018, the Association was advised that its total liability rateable value with effect from 1 May 2018 was assessed as £44,500. For 2025-26, this was increased to £60,000, which also incorporated an increase in the rateable assessment for ‘Plant & Machinery’ from £1,610 to £28,730. Surprised at such a large and unexplained increase, we of course raised this matter with the Council, which, on investigation, confirmed that its new changing rooms and pitch had wrongly been included in the Association’s rateable value – and had been so since 1 April 2023.

As a result, and with many thanks to Jess Neale of the Hockey Club for her support and advice, we sent a report to the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) formally challenging the rating, evidencing the Association’s assets with a plan of the site, and asking that it reverts to the previous rateable value from 1 April 2023.

To say that this was a time-consuming and, at times, an extremely demanding and frustrating process is something of an understatement.

This backdrop created extreme cash flow pressures for the Association, especially during the summer of 2025, which the Committee successfully managed to negotiate through prudent and careful financial monitoring, controlling of costs, including where possible deferring planned maintenance work.

The outcome of the Association’s representations to both the Council and the VOA is that in May 2026, we were informed that the Council is now wholly liable for paying the Business Rates applicable to its changing rooms and the artificial pitch, and the Association’s rateable value for its assets has been corrected. Indeed, the revised rateable value has been reduced to below that which was in force before April 2023, to £17,750, with the bonus that the Council has partially reinstated the award of discretionary relief, albeit it at a still welcome 50 per

cent. The Association has now been reimbursed its overpayments, which amount to over £20,000. A very positive and hard-won outcome.

The Association now finds itself in a more stable and generally health financial position, albeit that there remains no room for complacency.

Finances have been boosted by the Association hiring its facilities during weekdays to Sports Connect – a post-16 sports education provider. And we are grateful to our affiliated sports clubs for having accepted last year's £500 increase to the facilities fee. It is also necessary to increase individual membership annual subscriptions, from £40 to £50, with effect from 2026-27 (and subject to approval at the 2026 AGM), all of which are crucial to maintaining our financial viability.

The Association's Financial Statements appear at **Annex A** of this year's edition.

Paul Conroy
Hon. Treasurer

Annual Reports from the Association's Affiliated Sports Clubs

Gillingham Anchorians RFC

As expected, this was a tough season for both the 1st and 2nd XVs, with both sides having been promoted to higher leagues.



The objective for the 1st XV was to avoid relegation. This was achieved finishing 9th out of 12 teams. The league quickly took the form of the top 4 sides being very strong, the middle 4 being strong and the bottom 4 being competitive but winning fewer games. Specific games were targeted which brought some success, especially the home and away double win over Beccehamians. Bonus points were also an important target and we achieved 9, none more deserved than the 4 try bonus point won in the away match against Old Elthamians – the eventual runaway winners of the league, where we scored our 4th try in the last minute of the game. True team spirit shown and a marker for the tough games to come.

It quickly became evident that our main relegation competitors were Park House, Cranbrook, and Charlton Park. Week to week we watched the results and things were tight. We played all the top sides in the first part of the new year and so fluctuated in bottom or next to bottom place. The remaining matches against these three sides would define the success of our season. Charlton Park at home was a solid win and gave great encouragement to the

team. A big club day at home versus Cranbrook followed and another solid win against an improved opposition from the previous game against them. So, we travelled to Park House for our last realistically winnable game and a 'must win'. The game was very evenly contested with Park House leading into the final few minutes and looking solid. But the team spirit came through again and some lovely handling created a try in the corner for us to take and hang onto the lead until the final whistle. It meant we were safe from relegation and could relax!

Our 2nd XV was promoted to Rural Kent B which proved to be a very competitive league. Our main objectives were to ensure, where possible, regular games for the team and to provide an opportunity to get some senior game time for our Colts who were coming of age and ability to play for the seniors when their Colts fixtures allowed. These were achieved, with Kent County RFU commending the club on being able to fulfil all but one of its league fixtures and we are looking to build on this next season. A key fact of the season was also that we only had to forfeit one match due not having a front row, but we still played the fixture with uncontested scrums.



Unfortunately, our two coaches, Craig Whitehead and George Webb, decided to relinquish their positions at the end of the season. They have taken the club from a relegation battle when they took over halfway through the 2023-24 season, to promotion the following year and then to staying up this year. True club men and we thank them for all their efforts and making such a difference at the club.

So, we were forced to consider our situation and look at how to build for the future. With a new group of Colts coming through and several strong youth age groups following close behind, it was an opportunity to set up a 3-5 year plan.

We have recruited a new Head Coach, Jay Jenkins (former Head Coach at Aylesford, Faversham, Sittingbourne and latterly, forwards coach at Medway) and an Assistant Head Coach in Ian Lane (coached at Aylesford, Ashford and at Cliffe where he was Head Coach for 4 years). With this investment we have also secured Richie Collins as 2nd Team Manager/player, where he will play a key role in integrating the Colts into senior rugby as they become capable and eligible; Keith Hayfield and Dave Arnold will succeed Richie as coaches of the Colts. With this set up we are excited to create a young, homegrown side for the future and to have a flourishing second team to bring through talent.

The social highlight of the season was the End of Season Awards Night. This was held at the Clubhouse to contribute to the Association's takings over the bar. This was a great Club event with plenty of singing and dancing! Key winner of three awards(!) was Archie Johnson, who played every game of the season; even the three warm matches.

The season was a big success from a Supporters' Club point of view, with big numbers attending the September and December pre-match lunches and the Vets' annual dinner (80 attendees); and each Saturday afternoon, whether home or away, with many on the touchline and in good voice. Thanks go to Rob and Ella for making the bar so welcoming and looking after us.

Financially, the season has also been a success with a healthy surplus achieved, giving the ability to invest in the future of the club.

Thank you to all those volunteers who do so much to make the club run and to the Association Committee which provides the facilities for us all to enjoy.

Gillingham Anchorians RFC 1st XV: RFU English Clubs Championship – Counties 1 Kent, 2025-26 (9th place of 12 in the league)

Played	W	D	L	Pts For	Pts Against	+/-	Try Bonus	Losing Bonus	Pts
22	6	0	16	404	792	-388	5	4	33

Gillingham Anchorians 2nd XV: Kent County RFU – Rural League 'B', 2025-26: (11th place of 11 in the league)

Played	W	D	L	Pts For	Pts Against	+/-	Try Bonus	Losing Bonus	Pts
20	3	0	17	303	681	-378	0	3	31

1st XV Player of the Year:	Archie Johnson
2nd XV Player of the Year:	Will Stephenson
Players' Player of the Year:	Archie Johnson
Most improved Player of the Year:	Joe Ryan
Supporters' Club Player of the Year:	Archie Johnson

Minis and Youth section: The Club continues to expand its Minis and Youth base, with the number of players attending training each Sunday having grown across the age groups, which is fantastic to see.

Our vision is to build a family-friendly section for the Club, that is all-inclusive and hopefully that is what we are managing to achieve.

Links with Howard School are ever stronger, evidenced by its Rugby teams, across all age groups, playing their home games at Darland Avenue and by an upsurge in players from the School joining the Club. A big 'thank you' to Ollie Edwards from the PE department and current coach of Anchorians U15s for all his work in establishing a solid foundation for the pupils that has seen success across the School and the Club.

The Minis & Youth section, with the continued enthusiasm of the coaches, rubs off onto the players and will continue to be the building blocks for the club to provide senior players for the future.

Behind the scenes we have a fantastic support team, again all volunteers, that look after registration, kit, merchandising, social media platforms and generally keeping all things ticking over. We have gained several new coaches and are always looking for new coaches, so if you know anyone, please get in contact with us. We have managed to expand our coaching and refereeing base, with both current and ex-senior players who now have young children, along with parents new to the game. Without this support we would not be where we are. So, thank you to them.



This year has seen some big developments for the Club.

Firstly, the Colts won their League with a game to spare. Well done to Richie Collins and his team of coaches and the boys involved. The boys are the future of the Club and to this end and to further their development, we were able this season to secure Kent RFU approval for some of our 17-year-olds to play senior rugby in the 2nd XV, with several young players having made their senior debuts. This hopefully puts the Club in healthy position in future years.



The next crop of players from the Youth section is also coming through with healthy numbers currently in the U16s, 15s and 14s. The U15s also won the Sidcup 7s festival and were the runners-up in the Bowl Kent Festival 7s.

A couple of our U15s players, Aaron and Kuda 9pictured, left) have also been selected for Saracens Academy and Aaron also being part of the GB 7s development squad.

We are still hoping to establish our first Girls' team.

Finally, after a lot of hard work behind the scenes from Adam 'George' Webb and his coaching team, it looks like we will have a team at Under 11s next season, combining young players from Anchorians and Lordswood RFC; an exciting development for the Club.

We have played a number of teams across all age groups and have travelled to and a number of Clubs over the season. We attended a number of Festivals in the mini section including the Kent Festival at Medway and East Kent held at Ashford. The Minis, across all age groups, once again participated in Friday night floodlight games which was once again a great success.

The Minis go from strength to strength. An array of young people each Sunday morning running around and having fun from tag to their first taste of tackling! The parents have been equally enthusiastic as well!

Last season we started to welcome children from reception age, and it is an age group which has really taken off.

We will be looking to run sessions through the summer under the RFU guidelines on a Sunday for all and Wednesday evening for the older age groups. Touch Rugby is also available on Wednesday evenings (7-8pm) for all from the age of 10 to 90, so feel free to come down.

This also has the Club Shop selling merchandise for the club from hats, hat, umbrellas, cups sliders and much more!

Finally, a big thank you to all our sponsors, including Kwik Fit, Gillingham and Continental Tyres.

The Mini and Youth website is: www.garfc.org.uk

Nick Turner (Chair), Simon Summersett (Chair, Youth & Minis).

Gillingham Anchorians HC

Review of the Men's Section: In a tough season, the **1st XI**, captained by Phil Skillen and despite his goalkeeping heroics, flirted once again with the relegation zone for much of it. Sadly, Chris Lack missed much of the season through injury but was able to maintain his coaching responsibilities.

Whilst indebted to the goalscoring exploits of Joel Divers, it was very much a team effort that saw the 1s to safety on goal difference. Tom and Harry Banfield provided a solid defensive barrier with another set of brothers, Ethan and Joel Beard adding some youthful exuberance. Luc De Bont, Callum Harris, Alex Hamer, Adam Williams and Chris Risby added some much-needed experience to complement what is a very young team with a bright future. We welcomed back Jake Gordon back from university, albeit sadly just for this season, whilst Hayden Gray and Will Knight continued to improve and cement their places in the team. James Pitcher featured in many games despite his army training and with a local posting, we hope to see much more of him next season

The **2nd XI** kicked off the season under the inspirational leadership of Ben Selby. He coaxed his old mate Neil Byrne out of semi-retirement to form a formidable defensive partnership with Gareth Price, in front of the evergreen and ever reliable Darren Richardson. Mike Selby and a few cameos from Gary Jackson added plenty of experience, whilst Ben Pope, Sam Heaney and Ethan Sindrey provided a much-needed youthful balance to the team. Tom Wood was in

incredible form all season, winning numerous 'Man of the Match' awards and driving the team to a very creditable 6th place finish. This was despite being docked points for fielding ineligible players.

The **3rd XI** faced an incredibly challenging season, having achieved its third successive promotion which made the prospect of playing in the higher league even more daunting. Darren Carter took on the captaincy, leading the team brilliantly (and just as brilliant, the number of outstanding saves he pulled off each week) supported by the experience and support of last year's skipper, Sam Twigg. There were some heavy defeats but no shortage of enthusiasm, commitment and hard work.

Jamie Summerhayes and Nigel McDonald provided the valued experience whilst youngsters Callum Hughes and Ollie Knight performed consistently well. Relegation was avoided but we'll have to consider whether staying up is in the best interests of the team.

Having consolidated their position in the higher league last season **4th XI** skipper, Roger Pope always knew this was going to be another tough year, sadly for him curtailed by injury. He was still able to call upon the experience of John Heaney and Simon Pickard plus a final game guest appearance by Warren Shave. I think I'm right in saying that my big brother will finally be hanging up his astros following that last match.

At the other end of the age scale, Mark Richardson and Tyler Marks were both very influential figures throughout the season. The team seems to have morphed into the 'Mierscourt Mafia' with Dan Markham, Olly Edkins and George Salmon to name but a few. It was also great to see Alex Pope back on a Hockey pitch after far too long away. It's great that the Mierscourt friendships have continued after all these years, and I know the Association is very grateful for the increased bar takings both before and after games! We also saw the first full seasons for both Ethan Hopkins in the goalkeeping and Flinn Sindrey in defence and both performed exceptionally.

Review of the Ladies' Section: After the disappointment of relegation last season, the **1st XI** bounced back in style winning their league with something to spare. Meg Smith led from the front as always and she has certainly experienced the highs and lows in her two years of captaincy! Sarah Price excelled in goal

with a record number of clean sheets and after an extended break from Hockey, the club welcomed back Sarah Lack. She played a dominant defensive role, very ably supported by the ever-dependable Laura Skillen, although her season proved frustrating with a few niggling injuries to contend with. Megan Douch slotted into a new defensive midfield role and proved to be an absolute revelation winning several 'Player of the Match' awards.

Work commitments meant that the likes of Jess Gray, Amy Shave and Emma Lambkin weren't available every week, but they kindly adjusted their shifts to play as many games as possible. Sarah Webb had another great season working tirelessly down the flanks although she did occasionally annoy me by saying how unfit she was. Really!!

We were grateful that Tash Stevens continued her long commute to play whenever she could and Nat Summerhayes and Maisie Parker continued to lead the line with great enthusiasm and energy. We even had a few cameo performances from Jackie 'I've got my kit in the boot if you're short' Gray.

After just about avoiding relegation last season, the **2nd XI** did superbly well to finish 7th and only 3 points off 4th place. This could be attributed to a much more consistent line up and the addition of Elle Knight and Beth Powell, who would later feature in the 1st team.

Amanda Bishop proved an absolute rock at the back with her superb distribution and excellent reading of the game. Daisy Bunker proved as reliable as ever in goal aided by a solid defensive blanket provided by Stephanie Bigsby, Evie Cousins and Izzy Goddard.

Midfield featured the non-stop running of Charlotte Millen, Lily Eldridge – Still and Melissa McEwan, alongside Evie Luckhurst, Katie Beard and Helen Selby. Emma Strangleman managed a few welcome appearances when her shifts allowed, and Rebecca Shave played in a few games on her return from university.

A special mention to Mel Young and Sara Gooding who continue to roll back the years with consistent and tireless performances, not to mention a fair sprinkling of goals; I think Mel knocked in about 20, which is some going.

Thanks also to Sarah Millen for all her support with team talks, tactics, coaching and substitutions.

Turning to the **3rd XI**, our sincere thanks to captain, Kirsty Lambkin who is stepping down after many years at the helm. It has been a thankless task at times, but she always led from the front with her positive attitude and outlook.

Lucy Huckell went from strength to strength and knocked in her fair share of goals, ably supported up front by Katy Pitcher and the tireless Matilda Gooding. Frankie Nicoll and Hattie Gooding continued to shine in defence, and we were grateful for the experienced head of Rosa Hargrave to complement the younger members of the team. A mid-table finish was a fair reward for the team's efforts throughout the season.

The **4th XI**, led by Sarah Hopkins, created a strongly positive team spirit and knocked in a few goals with her fierce strikes from short corners. Jess Cameron's rapid improvement continued apace, as did that of her younger sister, Sophie in her first full season, who were both joined for a few games by their mum, Leanne Watts.

Another mother and daughter combination saw Frances Pitcher occasionally playing alongside Charli, whilst the balance of youth and experience was exemplified by the defensive combination of Freya Sindrey and Jackie Conroy, and the hard running and goal scoring of Sian Simpson.

Celebrating the backroom staff: As Chairman, I'm in the unique position of seeing just how much work is done behind the scenes by those, with little glory or fanfare, who keep the club running, not least my fellow directors Gary Jackson, Warren Shave and Paul Conroy (who is also our Treasurer). The directors' combined remit includes financial management, insurance obligations, VAT returns, pitch bookings and invoicing, pitch management, affiliation fees, floodlight replacement and Medway Council rent reviews to name but a few. A mention also to Richard Abel who continues to keep a watchful eye on club finances from afar, and to Jess Hopkins for her support and guidance in our successful business rates appeal.

A massive thank you to all our Committee members, team captains, coaching staff and umpires for their unstinting support in what has been a demanding season.

What's happened off the pitch: Our club punches well above its weight but the challenges keep coming thick and fast. It is important that our members learn of the history of the club and use it to understand our culture, our values and create a legacy for the next generation.

At the beginning of the season, we replaced the floodlights with new LED bulbs at a cost of £40,000. This was funded via an England Hockey (EH) loan partnership called the Pitch Together Fund, with our Club being the second in the country to be successful in securing this funding. A big shout out to Paul Conroy for all his hard work.

One of the loan conditions was that we obtain EH 'Clubmark' certification – in effect, the gold standard of how hockey clubs should be run in terms of governance, safeguarding and communication. Our application was overseen by Kerry Searle. Neither of us was quite prepared for just how much work would be involved. Nevertheless, the upshot is that the club has achieved its 'Clubmark' status. This is a fantastic outcome and testament to Kerry's hard work over many months. It is rare for clubs to gain this accolade and even rarer for a club of our relatively modest size to do so.

Team performances 2025-26

Team	P	W	D	L	Goal diff	Pts	League Position
Men's 1s	22	5	1	16	-43	16	10 th
Men's 2s	22	9	7	6	+7	31	6 th
Men's 3s	20	3	1	16	-62	10	10 th
Men's 4s	22	5	4	13	-15	19	9 th
Ladies' 1s	22	16	4	2	+45	52	1 st
Ladies' 2s	22	8	6	8	+7	29	7 th
Ladies' 3s	18	9	1	8	+7	26	5 th
Ladies' 4s	18	4	0	14	-34	9	9 th

What's in the pipeline? We want Gillingham Anchorians HC to be at the heart of our local community, working with local schools and Medway Council to

ensure we can deliver Hockey coaching, free of charge, to all children irrespective of background or ability.

We plan to partner Active Kent & Medway to promote the physical and mental health benefits of playing sport and belonging to a wonderful welcoming hockey club. We are discussing potential partnerships with EH and other organisations to develop coaches, encourage the recruitment of new players, umpires and volunteers; also, with local colleges to create a safe spectator area. We have already received two generous private donations towards the cost, and we have meetings with the Council to try and secure additional support from their community fund.

2025-26 Award winners:

Roy Thomson Most Improved Young Player (Ladies):	Matilda Gooding
Keith Hopkins Most Improved Young Player (Men):	Joel Beard
John Bloor Young Ladies Player:	Megan Douch
Jersey Trophy Men's U21 Player:	Drew Hughes
Martin Banfield Veteran Player:	Sarah Lack
Malcolm Batchelor Individual League Performance:	Sara Gooding
Adrian Kearney Team League Performance:	Ladies' 1 st XI
Phil Biggs Club Person:	Jackie Conroy
Les Phillips Club Personality:	Katy Beard
Ron Ashdown Individual Achievement:	Kerry Searle
Nigel McDonald Newcomer Award:	Ethan Hopkins
Chairman Award Overall Contribution:	Chris Lack

Trevor Shave
Chairman, GAHC

Anchorians FC

There's no doubt that this past season, 2025-26 will go down as one of the wettest in recent memory. January and February in particular were atrocious, and I think we went a good four or five weeks without being able to play at all. That obviously wasn't ideal.

That said, we were extremely fortunate to have access to our 3G and Astro facilities. These allowed us to continue training when grass pitches were frozen, and even to host competitive fixtures on the 3G. Many clubs locally didn't play a single game from mid-December right through to mid-February, so having those facilities made a huge difference.

I want to say a special thank you to our parents, players, and coaches for their understanding and patience during that period. We genuinely did everything we could to get games on where possible, and I think, overall, we managed the situation as well as we could.

Club Growth and Participation: This season we started with fewer teams than in previous years, which isn't where we want to be as a club. A shortage of coaches meant we were unable to run Soccer School at the start of the season, and we know that limited our pipeline at the younger age groups.

However, I'm pleased to say that towards the end of the season we successfully restarted our Soccer Schools. The aim is to rebuild participation and hopefully introduce new Under 7s, Under 8s, Under 9s, Under 10s and possibly Under 11s team's next season.

Huge thanks must go to the coaches who have volunteered their time to support this — without them, none of this would be possible.

On-Field Success: While we are very much a community club focused on inclusion and opportunity for all, it is incredibly pleasing to see teams who have come through our pathway achieving success after years of hard work.

I'd like to start with a massive well done to our **Under 18 Lionesses**, who have now won their respective division for the third consecutive year. After some tough seasons earlier on, a new management team came in four years ago and has completely transformed that squad. A fantastic achievement.

Next, well done to the **Under 13 Lynxs**. The team has slowly come together over the past few seasons with the team really coming together this season to win a league title this year. Congratulations to everyone involved.

Congratulations to the **Under 14 Jaguars**. After difficult seasons and management changes, their new manager settled in and led the team to a league title this year — an incredible turnaround.

Hot on their heels were the **Under 14 Pumas**, whose manager openly admits the season didn't start well, but a strong run after Christmas saw them finish joint second and now have a play-off game. A brilliant achievement.

On the girls' side, congratulations to the **Under 14 Hearts**, who dropped a division this season but responded in the best possible way by winning it. A great example of resilience and development.

I was also really pleased to see the success of our **Under 15 Leopards** this season. After several years of struggle, the team has really started to gel over the past couple of seasons, and this year everything finally came together as they **won their division**.

Our **newly formed Under 18s'** first season together, delivered a very strong campaign, narrowly missing out on winning the league but finishing as **league runners-up**, and reaching a cup final.



Cup Finals: This year we had more teams reach cup finals than ever before, particularly on the boys' side.

- **Under 8 Lions** won a thrilling final here on the 3G, decided by penalties after extra time — a fantastic game and a superb result in a manager's first season.
- Both **Under 10 Tigers and Pumas** reached the same final — well done to both sides, with congratulations to the Tigers who lifted the trophy.
- The **Under 7 Panthers**, in their very first season, reached a cup final. They showed outstanding character and should be hugely proud of their runners-up medals.
- Our **Under 18s** again in their first season, reached the cup final and after going a goal down rebounded strongly in the 2nd half taking the game to nervy penalty shootout, which thankfully they won!

- Finally, the **Under 18 Arrows**, in their final season together after being together since Under 7s, finally reached a cup final. A special thank you to Leon, Alan, and Phil for their continued dedication over many years.

Volunteers and Committee: Off the pitch, the club continues to be run entirely by volunteers, which for a club of our size is remarkable. It truly is the heartbeat of the club, and I couldn't be prouder of what we've achieved together — despite increasing pressures from the FA, Council, and leagues.

Sadly, we will see a few committee members step down this year:

- Helen Smart, after 10 years of incredible service including eight years as Treasurer.
- Kris Hughes, who joined as Vice Chair for the boys last season
- Leo Greenwood, who supported registrations this season alongside his dad Tim.

We thank them all sincerely for everything they've given to the club.

Key Events and Fundraising: Who could forget this year's Steve Cooke Charity Shield?

Having former England international and Arsenal legend **Paul Merson** attend and support the event was truly incredible and well beyond anything I could have imagined when we first started planning it. The atmosphere on the day was fantastic, and the excitement around the club was something really special.

Paul was excellent throughout the entire event. Despite the poor weather, he stayed right through to the end, taking photos and spending time with our players, members, and supporters. That level of commitment and generosity was a real touch of class, and on behalf of everyone at the club, I would like to say a **huge thank you to Paul Merson** for making the day so memorable.

Thanks to everyone's support and generosity, we managed to raise **just over £5,400 for Crohn's disease**, which is a fantastic achievement. A massive thank you to everyone who took part, helped organise, and donated — it genuinely made the day a huge success.



Our next major event was the **annual club tournament**, and once again it proved to be a tremendous success. I would like to give special thanks to **Anthony Lowe**, our former Secretary, who took the lead on the tournament from start to finish. His commitment and attention to detail ensured everything ran smoothly across the weekend.

I would also like to single out **Clare Bassett**, who took on the incredibly demanding task of coordinating volunteers, alongside supporting many other areas throughout the tournament. Her effort, and the efforts of a small group of very dedicated volunteers, were instrumental in making the event such a success.

It was our **most successful tournament to date**, raising a significant amount of much-needed funds for the club. Thank you to everyone involved last year, and we very much hope to build on that success and make this year's tournament just as successful as a key date in our club calendar.

Kit and Facilities: A huge thank you to **James May** for overseeing the transition to our new kit supplier, Macron, after our previous supplier sadly ceased trading. The range of home, away, training, and merchandise options is a real step forward for the club.

We're also progressing plans to replace our mini-soccer goals and install a new storage container, improving pitch access and safety.

Clubhouse: Finally, I want to thank Ella Green, Rob Wigston and Kelvin Macrae who have stepped in during Steve Williamson's absence. Rob & Ella, in particular, has been here day in, day out, and I'm sure you'll all agree the clubhouse is starting to feel like a real community hub again.

Looking Ahead: Soccer School is going well, and huge thanks to Phil, Jack, Gary, Sam, and Josh — particularly Jack and Phil, who have run sessions all season in all weathers.

We're welcoming new teams from other clubs, including a new Under 10s team and a new Under 11s team, plus two new JPL sides, including the Under 14 Halos.



This represents an important step forward in developing a progressive pathway alongside our community pathway.

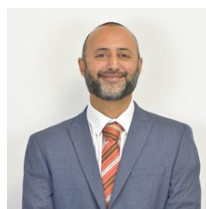
Another major development is the introduction next season of a Men's First Team, joining us in Division One of the Kent County League. This strengthens our pathway right through to senior football.

Our Women's team also deserve recognition, narrowly missing out on second in their first season and building an excellent foundation for future growth.

To finish, thank you to everyone involved in this club. Without your time, effort, and commitment, none of this would be possible.

Leigh Willis (Chair, Anchorians FC)

The Howard School report, 2025-26



Here we are once again a year on from 2025 approaching the summer of 2026 and I am really pleased with the progress the school continues to make.

It's really pleasing to see the School continue the long-standing affiliation to The Anchorians Association as many of our students and staff - both current and former - continue to maintain links with the 'Anchs'. We also thank The Anchorians for reminding us of our strong ties and allowing us to use this as

another platform to showcase the good work that has taken place this year at the school.

I write this at the end of the exams window and students' approach to these exams is the best ever and hopefully the summer's exam results continue to improve.

The GCSE exam results for the last 3 years have been the strongest we have ever had. The Progress 8 figure remained at +0.24 for two years in succession for 2023 and 2024. This placed us as 4th and then 3rd out of the 76 non-Grammar schools across Kent and Medway. In 2025, Progress 8 (unvalidated because students did not take KS2 SATS due to Covid) was +0.51. We can, however, be sure of the validity of our internal calculated measure because the average academic score increased by 3 points to 45.4. This was the highest score across all of Medway's non-Grammar Schools, including beating the Girls' non-Grammar points score. When compared with all the 76 non-Grammar Schools across Kent and Medway, we were ranked 2nd for Boys' Academic Achievement.

The Howard School has always tried its very best to be an inclusive school which is mirrored by the ethos of The Howard Academies Trust: Inclusivity, dignity, respect & ambition, supported by promoting fundamental British values. Many schools claim to be this but it's very pleasing to say that we can back this up by excellent exam outcomes for some of the most vulnerable groups of students. We do this by expecting and insisting on high standards of all students regardless of background and ability. Our daily aim is to support students to carry out the basics 100% of the time and remain in the classroom with the experts.

The Howard School continues to go from strength to strength, and its ever-growing popularity is more evident than ever. This year, we received a **record number of first-choice applications** for the upcoming academic year. While we are absolutely delighted to be the top choice for so many local families, the high demand unfortunately meant we faced an unprecedented number of appeals from parents who were not allocated a space. We wish we could welcome everyone, but we are incredibly grateful for the trust our community places in us.

Brilliant Ofsted report! During our recent Ofsted visit **96%** of the parents who responded stated that they would recommend the school and the Ofsted team

noted that there were over 200 really positive comments and that this much positive feedback very rarely happens.

We are extremely pleased to share that our latest Ofsted inspection card has now been published. We are absolutely thrilled with the fantastic things that Ofsted said about our school and for parental and carer feedback to Ofsted via the Ofsted questionnaire. Ofsted commented that they had rarely seen such positive feedback from parents and careers. This inspection was conducted under the current, more rigorous framework, which has significantly raised the bar for what constitutes "good" or "outstanding" practice across all categories. In an era where meeting these elevated standards requires a higher level of evidence and consistency than ever before, we are incredibly proud of our results.

Our school secured one **Exceptional** judgement, four **Strong** judgements, and two **Expected** judgements—a set of outcomes that reflects the hard work of our staff and our brilliant pupils and their supportive families.

Of schools inspected so far under the Ofsted Framework:

- Only 1 - 2 % have received an **‘Exceptional’** in any category. The Howard school has achieved one **‘Exceptional placing The Howard in the top 1-2% of schools’**. No other Secondary school (including Grammar Schools) in Kent or Medway has achieved an ‘Exceptional’ in any category under the new Ofsted framework.
- Only 15% have received a ‘Strong Judgment’ in any category. **The Howard School has achieved 4 ‘Strong’ judgements.**
- 50% of all schools nationally have received ‘Expected’ judgements. The Howard School average judgement across the 7 categories is **‘Strong’**

The recent Ofsted inspection places **The Howard School in the top 15% of schools nationally** and in line with schools who received ‘Outstanding’ under the previous framework. So, to summarise, **The Howard School is an ‘Outstanding School’.**

A very important point to note is that Inspectors informed us that we came very close to being awarded more exceptional judgements in the following categories:

- **Attendance and Behaviour: Behaviour was Exceptional** but although our attendance was better than the national average that they would like to

see it slightly higher above national. Otherwise, we would have been awarded '**Exceptional for Attendance and Behaviour**'

- **Inclusion:** Our approach to inclusion was **Exceptional** but they wanted to see slightly better exam outcomes in two A level courses.
- **Curriculum and Teaching:** was **strong** and close to **Exceptional**. Inspectors wanted to see more consistency in two A level courses.
- **Achievement:** was **Strong** and the progress students make is **above the national average**. Inspectors said to achieve strong or exceptional we need not only our Progress to be well above National but also Attainment. We did explain that we are very ambitious for all our students and a fair amount do achieve higher Attainment in line with Grammar Schools' but that we are a non-selective school in a highly selective area meaning more of these students who would achieve in line with Grammar students go to the nearby Grammar Schools and that it is unfair to judge us against Grammar Schools and therefore National Average Attainment. We strongly argued that we are the **2nd highest achieving Non-selective school out of the 76 non-grammar schools** and the progress our students make is **well above the national average** which is **Exceptional** for Kent and Medway. Parents and Carers can see this on the Department Of Education website¹.

However, despite our best efforts, the Inspectors refused to contextualise the Achievement of our students. If they had, we are confident that we would have received more exceptional and strong judgements.

Our Inspection Judgements

Exceptional

- **Personal Development and Wellbeing:** We are thrilled that our commitment to the whole child has been recognised as **Exceptional**. Under the new framework, this grade is reserved for practice that is among the very best in the country. Inspectors found that our work to

¹ <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/school/141466/the-howard-school/secondary/progress-measures-for-2023-and-2024>

support pupils' mental health, character, and spiritual growth has a "transformational impact," particularly for our most vulnerable learners.

A **Strong** judgement indicates that the school is not only meeting but consistently exceeding the rigorous national benchmarks. We achieved this in four core areas:

- **Curriculum and Teaching:** Our "knowledge-rich" curriculum and the high quality of instruction were noted for being deeply embedded and impactful across all subjects.
- **Leadership and Governance:** This reflects the "operational security" and clear strategic vision of our leaders and governors in driving school improvement.
- **Inclusion:** A standalone and high-scrutiny area in the new framework; our ability to remove barriers for every pupil was recognised as a significant strength.
- **Attendance and Behaviour:** This judgement highlights our calm, orderly environment and the "tenacious" work we do to ensure high levels of engagement from all pupils.

The **Expected Standard** is the new "high bar" benchmark. It confirms that the school is fully compliant with all statutory requirements and provides a high-quality education:

- **Achievement:** Our pupils are making the progress they need and deserve, meeting the tough new criteria for academic outcomes.
- **Post-16 Provision:** Our Sixth Form continues to meet all national standards, ensuring our oldest students are well-prepared for their next steps in education or employment.

A Note on the New Framework: It is important to recognise that the "Expected" standard is the baseline for a high-performing school. In this new era, "Strong" and "Exceptional" judgements are significantly harder to secure than previous

"Good" or "Outstanding" ratings, making these results a remarkable achievement for our entire school community.

	Judgement	Equivalent to under the old framework
Safeguarding	Met	Strong
Inclusion	Strong	Outstanding
Curriculum and teaching	Strong	Outstanding
Achievement	Expected	Good
Attendance and Behaviour	Strong	Outstanding
Personal Development and well-being	Exceptional	Better than Outstanding
Post 16 Provision	Expected	Good
Leadership and governance	Strong	Outstanding
The Howard School Average Overall	Strong	Outstanding

Full Ofsted report can be found following the link: <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/23/141466>

Sporting Success This has been another outstanding year for sport at The Howard School, with pupils achieving remarkable success across football, rugby and basketball. Their commitment, determination and teamwork have been

reflected in an impressive collection of league titles, cup victories and strong performances in county competitions.

Football has enjoyed a particularly successful season, with Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 all crowned league champions. Years 8, 9 and 10 also progressed to the Medway Cup Final, demonstrating their consistency and quality throughout the season. Year 11 also had an excellent campaign, narrowly missing out on a place in the final after a hard-fought semi-final defeat.



Rugby has continued to go from strength to strength. Year 10 secured the Swale Cup for an incredible fourth consecutive year, were crowned Kent Schools Rugby 7s Shield champions and reached the semi-finals of the Kent Shield, an outstanding achievement at county level. Year 9 showed significant improvement from last season, finishing third in the

Swale Cup, while Year 8 successfully defended their title to win the Swale Cup for a second successive year. Year 7 made an immediate impact in their first season, showing great resilience and character to win the Swale Cup by the narrowest of margins.

In basketball, the combined Year 9 and 10 team produced a flawless season, remaining unbeaten throughout the league campaign to deservedly finish as league champions.

Their exciting style of play, teamwork and dedication made them a pleasure to watch.



These achievements are a testament to the hard work and commitment of all our pupils, as well as the support from staff, parents and the wider school community. We look forward to building on this success and celebrating even more sporting achievements next year.

Looking Ahead: Our Next Steps to Becoming Even Better While we celebrate these fantastic achievements, we are always looking for ways to refine our practice and deliver an even better education for our young people. Continuous

improvement is at the heart of everything we do. Over the coming academic year, we are focusing our energies on three key strategic areas:

1. Elevating Our Approach to Reading

We have always championed reading, but we are moving from our traditional daily reading model to a much more sophisticated, nuanced approach. Literacy is the gateway to the entire curriculum, and our new strategy tackles this from multiple angles:

- **Tiered Interventions:** We are introducing targeted, tiered intervention programmes specifically designed to accelerate the reading ages of students who arrive at the school below age-related expectations.
- **Sparx Reader:** To bridge the gap between school and home, we have introduced Sparx Reader, an innovative digital platform that helps consolidate and encourage reading routines at home for all of Key Stage 3.
- **Subject-Specific Literacy:** We are working closely with our teaching staff across all departments to improve how subject-specific reading is taught, ensuring students can confidently navigate the complex terminology of science, history, and the arts alike.

2. Refining the Feedback Loop

Assessment is only valuable if it directly drives progress. Our goal this year is to further refine and improve the consistency of how we use assessment to actively close knowledge gaps. By ensuring every teacher uses high-quality, formative feedback across all subject areas, we can identify exactly what a student hasn't mastered yet and adapt our teaching to fix it immediately.

3. Driving the 'Ascent Strategy'

We are incredibly proud that our Pupil Premium (PP) students achieve better outcomes at The Howard School than the national average for children from similar backgrounds. However, we believe there is still room for improvement. To ensure students from PP backgrounds make just as

much progress as their peers, we are launching our **Ascent Strategy**. This will involve:

- **Forensic Daily Data Analysis:** Closely monitoring daily attendance, classroom engagement, and homework completion.
- **Targeted Support:** Using this data to intervene early and provide the exact support a student needs to stay on track, removing barriers to success before they can impact a child's progress.

By focusing on these areas, we are confident that the coming year will bring even greater success for every single student at The Howard School.

Although we are in the DFE list for a new building and/or refurbishment we will continue to upgrade facilities where we can get best value for money in terms of supporting school development priorities. The main project taking place is improving facilities for our 6th form students by:

- Refurbishing existing spaces to create a 6th form canteen space
- Refurbishing the 6th form centre to allow a space to better focus students during free time including new laptops and desktops.
- Refurbishing existing 6th form IT facilities

So, all in all, it has been another productive year, and we look forward with fingers crossed to another set of strong examination outcomes this summer. We are really proud of what we have achieved and if any member from the local community would like to visit the School, please feel free to contact the school office to book in for a tour or chat. Here's to an exciting 2026/27.



Jaz Johal
Head Of School

Differing memories of one's school days

The 50th anniversary of the opening of The Howard School prompted a chain of correspondence in the *Action Forum*, an independent monthly newsletter circulated free of charge to residents of Rainham and the surrounding area.

In an article written for the November 2025 edition, its author, E Barton described the many boys who “faced great anxiety” on arriving at the School,

and who found the institution as one “ruled through fear”, invoking “corporate [sic] punishment” and “intense authority”.

Each of us will have our own memories of our school days – some good, some not so good, or somewhere in between.

Discipline was certainly enforced, but seemingly no more or less so than that experienced at the Grammar School. As one former student, Alan Hickmott, who replied to the article observed (*Action Forum*, March 2026), “there was indeed tight control on pupil behaviour but, with 1,500 hormonal teenage boys, there needed to be... the school regularly employed the use of the slipper for relatively trivial offences and the cane for serious transgressions.” They were the formal sanctions; there existed far less formal and more immediate ones! Graham Hunt wrote (*Action Forum*, December 2025) that teachers “regularly threw wooden [black]board rubbers at your head or hit you with keys spun on a long chain if you weren't ‘on task.’”

On the other hand, another former student (‘AO’, *Action Forum*, January/February 2026) who went on to become a teacher at The Howard, has “memories... of the really supportive teachers who did not rule with the cane, but who spared the rod.”

Criticism was directed specifically at the ‘Alpha (α)’ and ‘A’ band system, which reflected the bilateral, Grammar-Modern structure of the School: the ‘Alpha’ stream which included those boys who had attended the former Gillingham Grammar School and from The Howard’s creation, those boys who had passed the ‘11-plus’ exam; and the ‘A’ stream, which was formed by those who had attended the former Rainham Secondary Boys’ School and those newly arrived first formers who had not successfully negotiated the ‘11-plus’.

This is reflected in the quite polarised responses to E Barton’s article, with many who offered a view recognising that there did exist, at least initially and to varying degrees, a perhaps inevitable ‘us and them’ attitude between the two streams and how staff treated them. One former pupil recalls that a “system of apartheid/discrimination was rigidly enforced with all of us ‘A’ streamers reminded constantly how useless we were, and the ‘Alphas’ given many privileges denied to us ‘oiks’.” Graham Hunt’s letter replying to the article

observed that he, “certainly [didn’t] remember being treated with any additional respect by the teachers...”.

There was, in fact, a great deal of interaction between the two streams even in The Howard’s early years, especially for sport and music², where it was one’s ability on the pitch or in the choir and/or orchestra and not in the classroom which counted.

More positively, the bilateral structure of The Howard allowed those boys who may have had an ‘off day’ when they sat the ‘11-plus’ or hit their straps a little later in their schooling, to transition from the ‘A’ to the ‘Alpha’ stream relatively seamlessly, and with far less disruption than had they had to change schools. This was evidenced by Alan Hickmott, who described the benefit of the bilateral system, having himself been able to move, successfully it seems, from one to the other, and allowing him to study Economics, Latin and Physics.

A final word from ‘AO’: “... to my old school, ... I tip my hat to all who served in that place and to those who now hold the torch high and take it forward with all its 50 years of history.”

From the archives

Anchorians FC: Football has had an on-and-off relationship within the Association over the last century, although perhaps surprisingly it was a Football, not a Rugby team that first played under the ‘Anchorians’ name. It is only relatively recently that the Football Club has become an established, valued – and today, the biggest – affiliated sports club within the Association, but for a time during the early 1980s, it made another valiant attempt to become a sustainable club within the Anchorians ‘stable’.



The Club’s then Chairman, **Alan Law** (pictured, left), recalls the period.

I was employed as an Art teacher at The Howard School from 1980 - 85 and during that time was pleased to become involved

² The Howard School at this time had an excellent and deserved reputation for music, with many musicians arriving into the 6th form from other schools to continue their studies. Many progressed to The Royal College of Music, The Royal Academy of Music; one became an Organ Scholar at Peterhouse College, Cambridge University, while another went on to be a leading and world-renowned opera singer, performing in all the great opera houses.

with coaching the 1st XI Football team and, as a member of the teaching staff, being afforded the status of an Honorary Member of the Anchorians Association.

Browsing the Internet, I came upon the Anchorians FC website and was somewhat disappointed to see no mention of the humble beginnings of the club which I helped set up in the early '80s, it feels as if I have been erased from history! If anyone has the time to check the records of committee meetings from that time or indeed, the local press they will hopefully find that my recollections are correct.



As a keen player locally, I helped establish, Mierscourt Valley FC, formed in the early '80s by a group of random blokes who happened to live on the new estate. After three or four successful seasons in the local league, I grew tired of training in Tesco's carpark and searching for suitable pitches to play on, realised that the Anchorians Association had well-established and various sports teams, but that Football was not represented within the Anchorians 'family'. I persuaded the Committee that we should be permitted to form a Football team.

We proudly took the name Anchorians FC and began playing in the local Medway and District League.

I was appointed Charman of the Football club and remember fondly Association Committee meetings with the aforementioned Les, Denis Howard and John Jezzard.

Teaching Art at the Howard School and coaching the School's 1st XI, I was in an ideal position to introduce many of them to the idea of playing for the Anchorians and can still remember some of the players' names: Brian Henneker (goalkeeper) Graham Pole, Steve Mannering, Andy Milner, Ian Mode, Ivan Crockett as well as colleagues: Phil Hughes (PE teacher) Chris Davies (PE - became youth leader) Nigel Burgess (Maths) and Nigel Martin, Robin Horsham – ex-pupils, I think.

I have attached a few bits and pieces which may be of interest: a photo of me in the Mierscourt Valley team, and a copy of the programme for the Testimonial

game for Ron Hillyard in which Phil Hughes, A. Thompson (sorry don't remember his first name) and I played.

I left the Howard School in January 1986 to teach in Germany with the Service Children's Education Authority (later, Service Children's Education - SCE) and sadly lost touch with the Club and indeed the Anchorians, although I do remember receiving a few newsletters from Les Phillips, and I am still the proud owner of my Honorary Membership card!

The **Old Anchorians Cricket Club** merged twenty years ago with Holborough CC, to form Holborough Anchorians CC, which is now based in Snodland.

Given the strength of Anchorians Cricket, especially through the 1970s and into the early '90s, it is sad to reflect that the Club was compelled to merge with another club to ensure its survival and that since then, the club's relationship with Anchorians has loosened (or withered on the vine) considerably; indeed, the club's badge does not include that of the Anchorians'.

In a throwback to the pre-merger era, the below photograph is of the Anchs 1st XI, probably taken at the Garrison Ground, Gillingham in the early- to mid-'80s, and which include many faces that will be familiar to many current (and older!) members the Rugby and Hockey Clubs...



Tom Sutton, Clive Heather, Mick Niven, Bob Neale, Bob Bushell, Kevin Bethell, Mark Heather, Gary Bonsall - Umpire
Dennis Howard, Brian Heather, Rob Fisher, John Lycett, (Neil Fisher)

Remembering 'Batch' Many long-standing members of the Association will fondly remember Malcolm Batchelor. Malcolm (or 'Batch', as he was known to all) attended Gillingham Grammar School from 1957-64; he passed away unexpectedly in 1995 while umpiring a Hockey match. He was a Life Member of the Association and Life Vice-President of both the Cricket and Hockey Clubs.



To mark the esteem in which he was held, both Clubs arranged a Memorial Cricket Match (see photograph) in the summer of 1995. As was reported by the local press,

“Glorious weather, a plentiful supply of ale and a sumptuous buffet lunch set the tone for a terrific afternoon’s Cricket in memory of Malcolm Batchelor – umpire and lifeblood of both Anchorians Cricket and Hockey Clubs – who died so suddenly in February.

The cricketers struggled against the accuracy of Ron Ashdown and returning veteran, Pete Francis, but Calvin Barton (49) and Chris Dovey (50no) came to the rescue and steered things through to a decent 187-6.

Rob Moore’s aggressive 78 and a subdued 50 by Kevin Bethell gave the Hockey team a start of 121, but from what seemed a great position, they crumbled against Steve Smith (4-29). Two wickets went down at 139, two more at 172, but Richard Brewer, Francis and Keith MacKenney scraped

enough runs between them to obtain a Hockey success with two wickets in hand.

Players and the 100 or so spectators adjourned to the Clubhouse for a barbeque, disco and more ale. Malcolm would have enjoyed that bit and would have been delighted to learn proceeds from the Memorial will be divided between the youth sections of both clubs.”

Scorecard

Anchorians CC

Marriott c. Brewer b. Ashdown	10
Carey c. Butler b. Francis	25
Waite lbw b. Gillett	14
S. Smith c. Ashdown b. Gillett	10
Barton c. Bloor b. Carter	49
Dovey not out	50
Thomas b. Brewer	12
Millgate not out	6
Did not bat:	
Bethell, Carter, Moore	
Extras	11

Total (for 6 wickets) 187

Bowling: Bethell 6-1-30-0, Ashdown 11-6-9-1, Francis 11-1-26-1, Gillett 7-1-20-2, Moore 1-0-3-0, Carter 10-1-44-1, Brewer 9-0-45-1

Anchorians HC

Moore c. R. Smith b. S. Smith	78
Bethell c&b S. Smith	52
Gillett b. Dovey	3
Barrett b. Dovey	0
Bloor b. Dovey	6
Brewer c. Thomas b. S. Smith	10
Francis b. Barton	14
Butler c. Thomas b. S. Smith	0
MacKenney not out	10
Ashdown not out	2
Extras	13

Total (for 8 wickets) 188

Bowling: Hallows 4-0-31-0, Cross 11-2-42-0, Marriott 6-1-24-0, Dovey 9.2-2-39-3, S. Smith 11-2-29-4, Barton 4-1-13-1

Obituaries

Bernard ('Bernie') John Carter (3 May 1947 – 23 September 2025): Bernie, who died last September aged 78, was born on 3rd May 1947 in Folkestone to cricket loving parents Doris and Alf, seven years after his sister Margaret.



Bernie's nephew, Richard Brewer writes, "Bernie attended Featherby infant and junior schools before joining Gillingham Grammar School in 1958, where he excelled at maths and science subjects, gaining entry to Southampton University in 1965 from where he achieved bachelor's and master's degrees in mathematics.

After graduation, Bernie worked as a statistician and analyst for Guinness at the company's Park Royal site. In the early 1980s, Bernie changed career path and found his niche as a maths teacher at the Temple and Chapter schools in Strood, his love of numbers being something he inherited from his dad. Bernie and his Mum were members of Kent CCC for many years and would be found at the many grounds Kent used to play at during the long summer vacation.

From the mid-1970s to early 1990s, Bernie was an active member of both Anchorians' hockey and cricket clubs, captaining hockey sides. His love of cricket, hockey and football was a bonding agent in so many of his relationships. He played over 300 games for the cricket club claiming over 500 wickets, with a best bowling performance of 7-29, and scoring with the bat over 1,800 runs, achieving his highest score of 47.

Bernie met Sue in 1983 at the St Lawrence cricket ground in Canterbury (he was watching; Sue was catering) and they were married in August 1986. Bernie became a father when Steph came along in 1987, followed by Lizzie in 1991. Bernie became a Grandad in 2020 to Harry but had to meet him through a window as he was born during Covid. So, although that meant waiting for cuddles with his new grandson, it was definitely worth the wait.

Bernie enjoyed watching Southampton FC whilst at university and continued to be a fan for the rest of his life; the 1976 FA Cup final victory being the highlight. Bernie could also be found at Priestfield watching the Gills. He fulfilled a lifelong dream by watching the Gills at Wembley in both play-off finals in 1999 and 2000.

Bernie was also a keen gardener, another interest handed down from his father and for many years kept allotments at Woodlands Road and then Hempstead.

He liked nothing better than freshly harvested fruit and vegetables and raspberries, particularly never made it home!

After retiring, Bernie loved to take the dogs, Lucy and latterly, Bella, for a stroll round the park, meeting other dogs and their owners and sitting enjoying being on the bench in Wigmore Park.

Bernie's family were very thankful that so many of his friends and former teammates could attend his funeral in October."

Rosie Evans: The Association was deeply saddened to receive the news that its former Treasurer, Rosie Evans recently passed away at the end of August 2026.

Rosie joined the Committee in June 2015, having stepped into the breach at what was a challenging time. She played an instrumental role in helping to steady the ship following a difficult trading period the previous year and in the absence of appointing a longer-term successor to Graeme Pike. Through her professionalism, sound financial oversight, and willingness to support those around her, Rosie earned the respect of her fellow Committee members and helped provide stability and confidence as the Association looked to move forward.

Although her time on the Committee was relatively short, her contribution was significant and her impact was lasting. We extend our sincere condolences to Gary & John and the rest of Rosie's family and friends. She will be remembered with gratitude for her service and the difference she made during her time with us.

Stewart Galbraith (27 January 1971 – 28 January 2026): Stewart, a member of Anchorians FC and who coached at the club for several years, sadly lost his battle against cancer, passing away a day after his 55th birthday.

Alan Peter Gosney (16 June 1950 – 4 July 2026): A titan of Gillingham



Anchorians RFC, who captained the 1st XV in 1980-81, Alan (or 'Gos', to everyone associated with the Rugby Club) was an inspirational leader who led from the front and never took a backward step; even for his team photograph – see below, Alan, wearing headband, is in 'full flight' oblivious of the camera, geeing up his teammates for the match ahead. Alan had succumbed to Motor Neurone Disease, which had been diagnosed only in April 2026, and which took hold of him with devastating rapidity.

His status within the Club was and remains legendary, especially amongst those who had the honour to play with him, including under his captaincy and guidance. This has been evidenced by the remarkable number of emails that the Club received in response to the news of Alan's death: "a big man in stature and in heart"; "he single-handedly pulled the club from the doldrums always with commitment"; "always positive which he instilled in those who played with him"; "Alan loved his Rugby but also thrived on the post-match celebrating and singing"; "always found his leadership inspiring, tough but also fun which brought out the best of all players."

As David Boardman recalls, Alan built a team that was unbeaten for a year or two, and it was his leadership, passion, communication skills and rugby ability that inspired us all. He was also a master of the 'dark arts' of playing rugby in those days (especially relating to rucking!); Alan, Glenn Page, Phil Hodges and Graham Boardman meant we were not a team to be physically intimidated. Another member of the team from that time, Mick Day says, "Through his talent, character and especially leadership, 'Gos' has created great memories for the Rugby Club in general and for the players that experienced superb performances and success with him on the pitch. The season (1980-81) where we lost three games only [of 30 played], playing fluid open running rugby was the most enjoyable both on and off the pitch and won't be forgotten by those involved."



Gillingham Anchorians RFC 1st XV (1980-81)

Back row: Hugh Keith, Paul Harris, Phil Hodges, Glenn Page, **Alan Gosney (Capt.)**, Rob Fisher, David Boardman, Ronnie Burns

Front row: Kim Weobley, Calvin Brady, Russell Seex, Jim Whiffin, Mick Niven, Tony Hanman, Clive Dowell

Phil Hodges's eulogy gave greater insight to how 'Gos' was introduced to Rugby, age 11, at Gillingham Grammar School, and which became his lifelong passion. Phil and 'Gos' became firm friends at that time, despite being on opposing teams in inter-house matches (Phil was in Grange House, while 'Gos' was in Darland).

They were both accomplished swimmers, competing against each other in the School pool and in inter-school competitions. Phil remembers an illicit midnight swim at the Strand, which evolved into an attempt to swim across the Medway and where discretion being the better part of valour luckily intervened when they were halfway across the river. It was the correct choice as a large freighter left Gillingham docks steaming directly to where the swimmers would have been.



While Phil left GGS at 16, 'Gos' stayed on to complete his A-Levels, continuing his Rugby education under the guidance of Colin Rankin and in one of the best 1st XVs the School ever had, which stood him in good stead for the future.

On gaining his A-Levels, 'Gos' went to Huddersfield to study Chemistry, gaining bachelor's and master's degrees, a doctorate, as well as becoming a lecturer. His 1980 paper, *The mechanism of nitrosation of 4-nitrophenol with aqueous nitrous acid* is a real page-turner!

'Gos' used his knowledge of Chemistry to great comedic effect. On entering any pub he'd never before frequented, he'd innocently ask for a Guinness shandy. This unusual drink, naturally, left the server somewhat perplexed: Guinness first, or lemonade? It wouldn't have mattered. 'Vesuvius' would have blown either way!

With his wife, Lorraine, who was a primary school teacher, they arrived back in Kent – and Anchorians, and where 'Gos' worked for the Wellcome Foundation. Glaxo and, ultimately GSK.

On the Rugby pitch, 'Gos' played for his university, Coventry RFC (which in those days, was one of the country's premier clubs) and had a trial for the Yorkshire county XV (again, in the days when county Rugby was part of the development pathway to England representation). Off the pitch, 'Gos' loved

Rugby's post-match camaraderie and drinking games, more often than not chairing a game of 'Bunnies', bringing everyone to order with his clarion call of 'Yehudi!' echoing across the Clubhouse. Why 'Yehudi'? Who knows?

But for Anchs, it is his legacy of strong and determined leadership which prevails.

NEWS OF 'OLD BOYS' AND GIRLS!

We welcome news from members of the Association who may have moved away or have simply lost contact with old friends and teammates. Helping everyone to keep in touch with old friends provided the fundamental basis of why the Old Anchorians was formed and it is something that the Association continues to make happen.

I would very much welcome any emails / letters from you giving your news and that of your contemporaries for inclusion in future editions of *The Anchor*.

Please send your correspondence either by post to:

The Hon. Secretary,
The Anchorians Association
The Clubhouse
Darland Avenue
Gillingham
Kent ME7 3AN

Or by email to: NigelFray@aol.com

The Anchorians Association: Financial Statements 2025-2026

THE ANCHORIANS ASSOCIATION

PROFIT & LOSS ACCOUNT for the:

	Year ended 30th April 2026		Year ended 30th April 2025	
	£	% Sales	£	% Sales
INCOME				
Bar sales:				
Bar sales	119,722	100.00	112,493	100.00
Less: bar purchases	50,546	42.22	44,693	39.73
Bar gross profit	69,176	57.78	67,800	60.27
Food sales:				
Food sales inc. catering	30,567	100.00	29,678	100.00
Less: food purchases	9,115	29.82	12,863	43.34
Food gross profit	21,452	70.18	16,815	56.66
	90,628		84,615	
Total bar and food sales:				
Sales	150,289	100.00	142,171	100.00
Less: purchases	59,661	39.70	57,556	40.48
Total gross profit	90,628	60.30	84,615	59.52
Bar manager/honorarium	22,463	14.95	26,108	18.36
Bar staff	38,299	25.48	33,637	23.66
	60,762	40.43	59,744	42.02
Bar & kitchen consumables	3,833	2.55	5,510	3.88
Depreciation - bar & kitchen equipment	3,089	2.06	3,134	2.20
	67,684	45.04	68,388	48.10
Gross profit on bar and food sales	22,944	15.26	16,227	11.42
Facilities hire:				
Member clubs - Facilities and equipment hire	27,437		8,984	
Other members - Pre school & hall hire	-		-	
	27,437		8,984	
Annual subscriptions:				
Members	47,080		23,120	
	47,080		23,120	
Other income:				
Pool Table surplus	23		234	
Interest received	51		859	
Donations towards club shop building works	900		-	
Contribution towards new entertainment system	736		-	
Capital grants credited to income	1,160		1,160	
	2,870		2,253	
TOTAL INCOME	100,331		50,584	

THE ANCHORIANS ASSOCIATION

PROFIT & LOSS ACCOUNT for the:

	<u>Year ended 30th April 2026</u>	<u>Year ended 30th April 2025</u>
	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>		
Premises:		
Ground rent and service charges	1,350	1,391
Rates	13,986	11,752
Light & heat	28,707	35,214
Insurance	4,627	4,369
Cleaning & waste disposal	4,469	3,635
Repairs & maintenance	7,913	8,154
	61,052	64,515
Admin:		
Telephone & broadband (BT bundle)	1,943	1,108
I.T. costs	479	430
Printing, postage & stationery	285	28
Professional fees	1,660	1,400
Entertainment (TV/music subscriptions)	10,005	8,358
Staff training (CPL)	250	-
Gaming machine rental	797	780
Sponsorship	-	175
Sundry expenses	496	310
Bank and credit card charges	2,898	2,297
Vehicle Hire	15	-
Depreciation - leasehold buildings	2,919	2,919
Depreciation - fixtures & equipment	762	735
	22,509	18,540
<u>TOTAL OVERHEAD EXPENDITURE</u>	<u>83,561</u>	<u>83,055</u>
<u>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) BEFORE EXCEPTIONAL ITEMS</u>	<u>16,770</u>	<u>(32,471)</u>
Less: Exceptional items		
Southern Water bill re: prior years	-	7,606
Book Publishing Costs - 50%	948	
	948	7,606
<u>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) for the period</u>	<u>£ 15,822</u>	<u>£ (40,077)</u>

THE ANCHORIANS ASSOCIATION

BALANCE SHEET at

	30th April 2026	30th April 2025
	£	£
ASSETS		
Fixed Assets:		
Leasehold building at cost	145,933	145,933
Leasehold building accumulated depreciation	(122,597)	(119,678)
	23,336	26,255
Fixtures, fittings & equipment cost	185,876	184,809
Additions in the year	1,498	1,067
Fixtures, fittings & equipment accumulated depreciation	(178,388)	(174,536)
	8,986	11,339
	32,322	37,594
Current Assets:		
Bar stock	5,162	4,778
Debtors & prepayments (see note 1)	2,421	4,391
Bank (NatWest current & deposit accounts)	38,552	15,358
Cash floats	4,643	339
Card receipts	3,328	1,156
	54,106	26,022
Current Liabilities:		
Creditors & accruals (see note 2)	6,758	2,776
VAT	4,678	510
	11,436	3,286
Net Current assets:	42,670	22,735
Total Assets less Current Liabilities	74,992	60,330
Creditors due after more than one year:		
Loans from club members	7,827	7,827
NET ASSETS	£ 67,165	£ 52,503
Represented by:		
Reserves:		
Profit & loss account:		
Brought forward at 1st May	42,063	82,140
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	15,822	(40,077)
Balance carried forward	57,885	42,063
Deferred Credit:		
Capital grants	9,280	10,440
	£ 67,165	£ 52,503

The accounts for the year ended 30th April 2026 were approved by the committee and signed on their behalf on _____ by:

L.J. Willis
Chairman