



PRESS RELEASE
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CELEBRATING THE SPORTING TRADITIONS OF THE DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND'S RIVER

A new bench has been put in place along the Duke of Northumberland's River which celebrates the involvement of a family with the Harlequin Football Club

The Friends of the River Crane Environment (FORCE) have been working with Richmond Council, the Harlequin Football Club and local resident Graham Hollins to install a carved bench on the improved footpath along the Duke of Northumberland's River adjacent to the Stoop rugby ground.

The bench, put in place at the end of Harlequin's 150th season, is dedicated to Malcolm and Pat Hollins who had 6 decades of involvement with the rugby club. Malcolm provided free physiotherapy, getting many players back on the field for the following weekend. He sat on several committees including serving as Chair of the Centenary Ball Committee in 1967. Pat was involved in helping behind the scenes to organise the after-match players' teas and other events. She continued to provide support to the club even when widowed. Both were instrumental in the running of the season-opening Sevens tournament – a club highlight. Their sons, Graham and Bill, played for the club in the 1970's & 80's.

Graham Hollins said, "We think this a very fitting way to celebrate our parents' association with the club. The revamped footpath is excellent and will be used by many people, not least when walking to the RFU ground from Twickenham pubs! I remember playing behind the stand as a kid near the river and I'm pretty sure my mum and dad parked their car every Saturday on almost the exact spot of the bench. I hope that many old Quins players, who benefited from my father's help, will visit the bench and reminisce *en route* to a match at the Stoop".

Rob Gray, Chair of FORCE commented; "Over the last few years FORCE have been working with Richmond and Hounslow Councils through the Crane Valley Partnership to improve the ecology and access for people along the Duke of Northumberland's River between Twickenham and Isleworth. This little known, but unique river is home to both a diverse wildlife and two rugby grounds. The bench recognises both rugby and the river, and is one of fifteen carved benches that celebrate something unique about the parks and open spaces in the Crane valley. To learn more about the Duke of Northumberland's River and to see a downloadable map see: <http://www.force.org.uk/discover/the-duke-s-river-walk/>

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Harlequins players Charlie Matthews (l) and James Chisholm (r) sit either side of Graham Hollins, whose family donated the bench.