

**Lymm RFC Ltd**  
**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting**  
**8<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

**Present**

Kerry Anderson	Julie Antonelli	Steve Ashall	Chris Askew	Lorraine Brodrick
Aimee Cartwright	Colette Cartwright	John Cartwright	John Case	Lionel Cockayne
Rick Condo	Matt Cooper	Peter Cornelia	Adam Fletcher	Alan Gibson
Tony Halford	Brian Hope	Mark Hesketh	Will Hind	Rick Johnson
Neil Kelly	Sharon Kelly	Jim Knowles	Guy Larkin	Andy Leach
Danny McNicholl	Richard Membery	Dave Newton	Simon Plumb	Malcolm Pritchard
Peter Radcliffe	Paul Rigby	Steve Rule	Dave Simpson	John Walman
Alan Wilkinson	Tony Wright	Kate Yeomans		

**Apologies**

Neil Allen	Katy Arber	Jonny Cartwright	Andrew Currie	David Dickinson
Yvonne Halford	John Hopkinson			

**Welcome and Introduction**

The Secretary, Rick Johnson, opened the meeting by welcoming the attendees to what was the 4<sup>th</sup> AGM of Lymm RFC Ltd. Due to restrictions imposed on public gatherings owing to the Covid-19 pandemic the meeting was being held with some attendees in the Clubhouse and some attending virtually.

**Previous Minutes**

The minutes from the previous AGM were accepted.

**Chairman's Report - John Cartwright**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Members and Friends,

In May last year, on the night of the 2019/20 AGM, I sat at home in front of my computer, as I expect many of you did, experiencing our first ever AGM on Zoom. At that time I think we all expected, or at least hoped, that the Covid pandemic would dwindle over the summer and we would be back to 'normal' before the 2020/21 season began. Clearly that was not to be and 14 months on we are still impacted by a pandemic that has changed our lives for ever!

Before I talk about the specific activities of our great club over the past 12 months, I think it is appropriate to take a moment to remember all those people in our local and wider community that have suffered as a result of the pandemic. The impact of this pandemic has affected many people in many ways, however, what has been evident throughout this period is the support that our community has offered to those that have been impacted most. Thank you to every member of the club that gave their time to help their family, friends and neighbours – you are great people.

I think we should also acknowledge the great effort that all of our key front line workers have put in to ensure the impact of the pandemic is minimised and those unfortunate to catch the 'nasty bug' have been given the best chance to pull through. Our society is indebted to all those involved.

Sadly, many families have experience the ultimate loss of a loved one during this pandemic, and we send our sincere condolences as a Club to all of those affected in this way. Over the past 12 months we lost a number of long-standing members and friends and I would like to acknowledge those here, they include Gary Fletcher, Brenda Johnston and Martin Hampson – may you all rest in peace.

I would now like to turn to the specific activities of the club over the past 12 months from my perspective as Chairman. This part of my report always gives me great pleasure as it provides an opportunity for me to openly thank the huge number of people, without whose commitment we would not be the club we are. Given that we have a number of agenda items that will provide more detailed information on some of these aspects, I will leave the detail to those better informed than me and point you to their reports this evening.

Without question, one of the biggest positives this year has been the continuous support that we have received from our volunteers and members. Thank you to each and every one of you, your support has ensured that the concerns we raised in last years AGM have not materialised and we find ourselves in a good position with a positive outlook for the future. I know that our Treasurer, Andy Leach, will provide a more detailed view of our financial position in the next agenda item so I will not dwell on that here but will take a moment to thank Andy and Kate Yeomans, on behalf of the club and our membership, for their sterling work in managing the financial aspects of the club, thereby ensuring financial sustainability over the past year without the income from large events such as the Marquee and Panto that we had been used to for many years. **Thank you Andy and Kate!**

Once again the restrictions created by Covid-19 prevented our Marquee events in summer 2020 and 2021 and the Panto in December 2020. These were not the only events that we were unable to undertake in the past 12 months and we still have not celebrated our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as a Club or the formal opening of the AGP. We are currently working on these activities to see how best to integrate them in to our schedule and will let you know the outcome of that work in due course. We are hopeful that the Panto and Marquee events will be part of our future activities and will keep you updated in this respect – watch this space!

As ever, a huge thank you to our **Executive Committee** who have once again made the role of being Chairman easier. During the last year we extended the Executive to include representatives from our Squash section and the new Tennis section, Manor Road Tennis Club. Welcome to Richard Mernbery from Squash and Pete Radcliffe from Tennis. Both are adding a positive and important voice to our Exec activities from these 2 sections. All members of the Executive take on a significant amount of work to ensure their specific responsibilities are delivered to the highest possible level – thank you one and all!

One of the obvious impacts of Covid-19 has been the restrictions created by rules applied both nationally and locally. The familiar surroundings of Beechwood have been missing for all of us for a long period of time. This will hopefully change over the coming months, when once again we will be able to enjoy a good pint, great food and excellent company in the club house. At this point I want to acknowledge the hard work and effort put in by many people, including our Bar Manager **John Walman**, to create a Covid-safe environment for all our members and visitors that complied with all covid rules current at the time. Our approach and commitment was recognised as a great example by the Warrington Borough Council Covid team.

To overcome the restrictions placed on our Clubhouse facilities, we applied for and secured a license for our Halfway House adjacent to the AGP. This created an opportunity for John to engage with many different membership groups, both at the weekend and during the week, and serve them with refreshments from the Halfway House. Feedback from our members to this development and John's service has been excellent, well done John and thank you!

As we move in to a non-Covid environment we hope to make more use of the Halfway House on match days and other occasions. With regards to our social and other activities, we have always relied upon local youngsters to provide support for John on the bar and in other capacities within the club. A big thank you to **all staff** that have continued to support the club over the past 12 months, your commitment is very much appreciated. We do however need to identify and develop new staff to support John and the club in the future as our existing staff follow what has become a recognised progression as they move on to University and their professional lives. If you know of any local youngsters that have an interest in joining the bar team at the club please do let me know and I will make John aware.

With regards to Covid restrictions I would like to acknowledge the positive response from **our membership** to the new and often confusing rules that we have had to follow in order to be compliant. Your support in this respect is very much appreciated.

Clearly, one element of our environment that has not slowed down in a Covid world is our outside spaces and pitches. Once again a huge thank you to our **Old Forkers**, with **Chris Askew** taking up a lead role, for their continued

effort in maintaining the pitches and keeping the grass, plants, weeds and trees in check around what is now a significant estate. The volunteer Grounds team have also had to deal with the growing pains of our AGP management. Thank you for your patience and support as new users of the facilities come to terms with the rules and protocols of playing on the AGP. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of **Paul Wardle** from our Touch section who has taken on a lead role in managing the AGP and the many groups that use it. This is sometimes a frustrating and thankless task.

Thank you to **all our sponsors** who throughout the last year have continued to support the club in new and different ways. Many of the traditional sponsorship opportunities have been reduced in the short term due to the restrictions created by Covid-19, but others have come to light and have been taken on board by our members and non-members alike. By way of example:

- Crowdfunding appeal – 100+ donations amounting to £15k+
- Donations of £250 each to buy 20 Bench/table combinations located around the Halfway House and in the walled garden – All sponsors are recognised by an engraved plaque on their table.
- Provision of CCTV camera system around the main clubhouse, inside the entrance to the club and adjacent to the Halfway House. This included the equipment and installation of all the cabling and devices – provided by Kinaxia Logistics, care of Mark Stephenson
- Provision of multiple physical network connections between the main club house and the Halfway House, including cabling, installation and testing. These connections will provide CCTV coverage at the Halfway House and connectivity for our till system – this was provided by DSIS, care of Paul Widdrington
- Steel pedestrian and vehicle access gates to the walkway along the side of the AGP and into the south compound adjacent to the Halfway House – this was provided by Ian Greenwood through his business contacts

These are just a small number of examples of the way that members and organisations have sponsored our club, helping to create long term sustainability. I apologise if I have missed any specific examples in this list, the support of all our sponsors is very much appreciated.

Looking forwards, I am very pleased to be able to announce two main sponsors for the coming season. **Tony Burgess** has made a significant personal donation to the club for the 2021/22 season and **Challenge-TRG** have agreed to be our main sponsor for the next 3 years. Challenge-TRG Group provide multi-service logistics solutions to the haulage and transport industry. This sponsorship, with both sponsors having children in the M&J section, is at a level to effectively replace that of the club's previous main sponsor. We are also currently discussing other sponsorship opportunities which if successful will be communicated as soon as possible.

As is always the case, I need to say a huge Thank you to **all our volunteers** who give up their time to support and manage the club. Individually this group is too numerous to mention but you are a fantastic group of people, please continue to support our club in the way that you do.

For obvious reasons, the playing of Rugby, Squash, Tennis and Hockey has been very hard hit by the pandemic over the past 12 months. However, we have seen some play in all sports and at both senior and junior levels. On behalf of the Executive I would like to say a huge thank you to **all players, coaches and their supporters, parents, partners and siblings** for helping to maintain one of the primary reasons for our club to exist – the playing of sport. Representatives from each section will provide more details on their particular sport later in the agenda.

Thank you to our **non-playing membership**; Honoraries, Life-members, VPs, Social members and all our partner members, including **all wives/partners and girl/boy friends of all players/volunteers**. Thank you for your continued support off the pitch. Our overall membership continues to maintain a strong level of over 1000 members across all categories and this excludes the M&J children participants. The willingness for members to continue to pay their subscriptions during these difficult times pays testament to their commitment to our club – Thank You!

Finally, in this part of my report, I would once again thank **my wife and my family for their support and patience** without which I would not be able to undertake my role as Chairman of Lymm Rugby Club.

As I am sure you will appreciate, Covid-19 also slowed down our new Clubhouse development activities but a tireless group of committed volunteers have continued to push forwards on a number of fronts so that we can move forwards at pace when all Covid-19 restrictions are lifted. I will leave it to Dave Newton and David Simpson to update you on the specifics in the Club Development agenda item but would like to take the opportunity to thank them and others on behalf of the club for their continued support of the development project.

Our Vision and ambition to see a sustainable multi-sports club here at Beechwood, a club that is at the very centre of our community and that is seen as a key contributor to the development of multiple sports and other community related activities on a long term basis, has not changed as a result of Covid-19 and is as strong as ever.

We still don't know what the long-term impact of Covid-19 will be on any of the sports that have a home at Beechwood, but we are closely following the developing guidance provided by the relevant constituent bodies. The overall challenge that Rugby Union and other constituent bodies face at all levels of the game is still not clear so we should expect some changes in the future. However, this should not be seen as all doom and gloom, Covid-19 may well be the trigger that helps to create a sustainable future where we can grow Grass Roots sport in a way that attracts more players to the sports and their families to the sporting community, for all ages, gender and ability.

If the reaction and support from all our members and volunteers throughout the past 12 months in a Covid world is anything to go by, we should be confident that Rugby and other associated sports played from Beechwood have a bright future.

Thank you!

### **Treasurer's Report - Andy Leach**

Fellow members and friends, it gives me great pleasure to present my second Treasurer's report since taking over the role at the 2019 AGM. I have divided my report under a number of headings which I hope make sense and provided a useful structure.

#### **Corporate structure**

As explained in my report to the 2020 AGM, following a period of restructure and reorganisation, the structure we now have for our club is as follows:

##### **Lymm RFC Limited ("LRL")**

- A company limited by guarantee where each member's liability is limited to £1.
- A charity registered with the Charities Commission.
- Has a board of directors currently comprising: Executive Officers - John Cartwright (Chairman); Andy Leach (Treasurer); and Rick Johnson (Secretary); and 3 non-executive directors – Tony Wright; Mal Pritchard; and David Simpson. Each director is appointed for a year at the AGM, standing for reappointment at the following AGM if they wish.
- Undertakes all our rugby related activities and owns all our land and buildings, exception for the Manor Road Tennis Club ("MRTC") site (see below).
- Has two wholly owned subsidiaries – Lymm Beechwood Limited and Lymm Garden Limited.

##### **Lymm Beechwood Limited ("LBL")**

- A limited company, wholly owned by LRL.
- Has a board of directors currently comprising John Cartwright and Andy Leach.
- Undertakes all our commercial activities, such as managing the bar and organising fund-raising events, including the panto and marquee events.
- Each year, any surplus created is donated to LRL, thus avoiding any unnecessary and avoidable tax leakage.

##### **Lymm Garden Limited ("LGL")**

- A limited company, wholly owned by LRL.
- Has a board of directors currently comprising John Cartwright, David Simpson, Pete Radcliffe and Andy Leach.
- Was dormant until August 2020 when it acquired the Manor Road Tennis Club (MRTC) site.
- Was established as a potential means to realise property under the development programme in a tax efficient manner.

One of the consequences of this structure is that it, effectively, splits the club's financial performance across different legal entities, making it difficult for the casual observer to really appreciate the full picture. This is addressed further below.

### Results to 30 June 2020

The annual Accounts for LRL – together with the accounts for LBL, LGL and the old Lymm Rugby Club trust - were approved by the Directors on 25 May 2021 and were filed at Companies House and with the Charities Commission before the deadline of 30 June 2021 (extended from 31 March 2021 and 30 April 2021 respectively due to Covid related dispensations); and with HMRC before its filing deadline of 30 June 2021.

As can be seen from the accounts of LRL, the surplus for the year to 30 June 2020 was £36,503. As is often the case these days, the accounts are difficult for third parties to interpret, something which is magnified in the case of LRL as our accounts are required to follow a specific Charities Act format, which is more designed for organisations of a different shape. This is further complicated as we choose not to prepare accounts which consolidated the performance of LRL with its two subsidiaries, LBL and LGL. In order to get a true picture of our overall financial performance, it is necessary to aggregate the accounts of LRL with those of LBL, LGL and, for the final year, the Lymm Rugby Club trust. The effect of this is shown below.

	2020	2019	2018
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Donations	59	23	31
Subs	86	77	75
Sponsorship	22	21	23
Bar surplus	52	28	46
Panto surplus	33	27	23
Summer events surplus	0	34	24
Other income net of other direct costs	5	(51)	(31)
Gross profit	257	159	191
VAT partial exemption	(3)	(8)	8
Establishment costs	(36)	(36)	(30)
Playing costs	(57)	(53)	(47)
Grounds costs	(15)	(17)	(9)
Lease and repair costs	(5)	(8)	(11)
Salaries	(42)	(19)	(19)
Accountancy	(4)	(12)	(5)
Miscellaneous	(8)	(7)	(1)
Donations made	0	(6)	(7)
Finance costs	(25)	(23)	(25)
Depreciation	(21)	(6)	(8)
Total costs	(216)	(195)	(154)
Surplus/(deficit)	41	(36)	37

On the face of it, notwithstanding the adverse impact that Covid-19, and the resultant lockdown, had on our activities from March 2020, a deficit of £36k in 2019 moved to a surplus of £41k in 2020.

The impact of Covid-19 on the financial performance in the year to June 2020 may be summarised as follows:

- The impact on our club was swift and significant, effectively stopping all activity for the last three months of the financial year – traditionally a highly active period as the rugby season comes to a close, leading immediately into our summer marquee events, contributing a significant proportion of our annual surplus. The curtailment of these activities cost us at least £40k.
- We were unable to take advantage of the initial Furlough scheme introduced by the Government, and so bore full employment costs through the year. With hindsight, this had a positive impact as John was able to do a lot of work at the Clubhouse and Halfway House which put us in a good position going forward and Kate's role in maximising income and cash flow whilst minimising costs over this period was invaluable.

- Faced with this situation, the Executive moved quickly to eliminate all unnecessary spend, mothball the clubhouse and generate as much revenue and cash as possible. To this end, we eliminated where possible and otherwise reduced all but basic expenditure (e.g. insurance, security).
- On the positive side, being categorised as a leisure/hospitality organisation, we were eligible for local authority support and received a £25k in grant in this period, in addition to a £3k grant from the RFU.
- In addition, in the period we raised an incredible £32k from our “Your Club Needs You” initiative. This £32k, which has been funded by almost 110 different club members, comprised - loyalty card top-ups, life memberships and donations together with associated Gift Aid.

Otherwise, a couple of areas worthy of comment on the results for 2020 are:

- The increase in playing costs is wholly attributable to further reduction in RFU support (usually contributions towards travel and referee costs) which will reduce further to zero from the 2021/22 season.
- The increase in wages reflects a combination of Kate being onboard for a full year, and the reclassification of bar staff wages to salaries from direct costs.

Adopting a similar methodology, the aggregated balance sheets on 30 June 2020 were as follows:

	2020	2019	2018
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Fixed assets	1,561	1,501	1,487
Stock	5	7	24
Debtors	3	55	89
Cash	19	45	56
Creditors	(45)	(101)	(127)
	(18)	6	42
Borrowings	(571)	(576)	(562)
Net assets	972	931	967

Things to note here are:

- All but £85k of fixed assets relate to freehold land and buildings. As part of a valuation exercise completed for Handelsbanken (see below), Savills valued this land and buildings at £2.3m.
- Creditors and debtors are much lower due to the cancellation of the marquee events and general activity levels. Included within creditors is an amount of £15k representing the amount members had pre-loaded their loyalty cards.
- Borrowings comprise a £23k interest free loan from the Rugby Football Foundation (dating back to their support for our 2006 land acquisition comprising pitches 2 to 5), which is being repaid at the rate of £7k per annum (to provide some Covid relief, the RFF deferred the repayment due in the June quarter of 2020) which will be fully repaid by December 2023, and a £548k loan from Handelsbanken.
- Our relationship with Handelsbanken remains very positive. Throughout the pandemic we have kept them well informed of our financial position and the actions we have taken to manage our finances within our means. On more than one occasion they have said how impressed they are with our financial management and control, reporting and forecasting. The Handelsbanken loan is interest only, at 2.75% over LIBOR, and was originally set to mature and start to pay back the principal in January 2022. However, given the confidence they have in us and the direction of travel of our development plans, supported by the valuation undertaken by Savills, they have agreed to extend this maturity date by a further 5 years to January 2027 at which time, depending on the progress of the Clubhouse Development Programme, the expectation is that it will be either fully repaid or any balance converted into a longer-term amortising facility.
- In addition to this loan with Handelsbanken, we have a £75k overdraft facility in place which has only ever been used sparingly to help manage short term cash flow.



## **Impact of Covid-19 on our finances to 30 June 2021**

At the time of our last AGM, the Executive had created a plan to see things through to September 2020 (when it was the widely expected things would get 'back to normal') such that we would enter the 20/21 season in a similar cash position to a 'normal year'. Clearly, this hope proved somewhat optimistic and the whole of our 2021 financial year has been severely disrupted with many of our usual revenue streams decimated. However, we have continued to take all actions possible to minimise costs and cash outflows whilst maximising income opportunities and cash inflows. In particular, in the year to June 2021:

- The continuing support provided by Government for the hospitality/leisure sector, yielded a further £31k in grant income.
- Our crowdfunding appeal generated £15k, including Gift Aid.
- In addition, other Gift Aid claims yielded a further benefit of £12k.
- We received the maximum Covid support grant possible from the RFU of £50k.
- We were able to make use of the 'upgraded' partial furlough scheme introduced by the Government from November 2020, flexing the hours that John and Kate were required to work to match our ability to open and operate. In all, this generated a further £10k of financial support.
- We entered into an agreement with a local operator to store caravans on our premises. This has generated, broadly, an additional £1,500 of income per month since July.
- We have continued to manage costs as closely as possible to minimise any unnecessary outgoings.
- We had hoped to secure a £50k Bounce Back Loan under the Government's support for small businesses but, due to a series of technicalities, were unable to do so.
- We have made a £98k claim under our Business Interruption Insurance policy, but as you may be aware, there is considerable resistance from the Insurance Industry to such Covid related claims. There is an ongoing class action suit being run by the Financial Conduct Authority on behalf of small insured businesses such as ours, however we remain hopeful, rather than expectant, of receiving any pay out from this.
- We have applied for a £45k loan under the RFU's 'Asset Improvement Loan Scheme'. This loan (2% interest, 2-year holiday, 6-year repayment term) is specifically earmarked to part fund an identified £51.5k investment in (i) grounds maintenance; (ii) a new boiler; (iii) kitchen equipment; and (iv) grounds equipment. The initial advice from the RFU was that these awards would be determined and advised by 2 July, but we have recently been advised that this will not now happen until 'mid-August'. In any event, if our loan application is unsuccessful, we will still make at least half of this identified investment need from our own resources.
- In addition, we continue to pursue other opportunities to leverage our assets by identifying incremental revenue streams. To this end Conexus Tutors, Lymm Piranhas, Pilates classes and a local coffee van operator are each making use of some of our facilities for a few hours each week. Whilst individually none of these is 'game changing' collectively and over a year they will add a few thousand pounds in revenues at no, or little, incremental cost.

The net impact of the above is that that we are today in a much stronger financial position than any of us would have considered possible 12 months ago had we realised that the impact of the pandemic would have lasted for so long. Indeed, on 30 June 2021 we had cash reserves of £60k in addition to our unused £75k of overdraft facilities.

## **Year to June 2022**

We are all hopeful that things will return to some form of normality in time for the new season and that activities at Beechwood will quickly gain momentum. Let's face it, there is no better place to meet friends, have a chat and enjoy the hospitality that John and his team will have to offer. However, it would be foolish of us to believe that overnight everything will reset to 2019 levels of activity. 2022 will be a transitional year – and that is what we will plan for. We will continue to watch our expenditure very carefully, generate income and cash flow from as many sources as we can and retain a robust financial position. I hope and expect that in a year's time I will be able to report to you another solid financial performance and present a stable platform from which to build into 2023.

## **Other matters**

As mentioned above, in August 2020 LGL acquired the MRTC site at a cost of £8,000 and the MRTC members joined our newly formed Tennis section. The logic for this is irrefutable, not least as it creates the opportunity for year-round sporting activity. As part of this project, we have secured the commitment of the LTA to provide £240k in loan funding towards the construction of new tennis courts within the walled garden. This would allow the commercial development of the MRTC site, facilitate year-round tennis and build membership. Clearly there are a number of key

steps yet to fall into place, but the progress made to date – for which Pete Radcliffe and David Simpson should be given credit – represent tremendous strides towards this goal.

I'd like to acknowledge Kate and John Walman's help, support and hard work, often in difficult and ever-changing circumstances, over the past 12 months which I think will ensure that we are in as strong a position as possible to rebuild our revenues and move forward over the next 12 months.

Finally, thanks to the hard work and support of my fellow Directors, Executive Committee members and our wider membership I am confident that we will continue in a healthy financial position going forward and have tremendous opportunities to ensure that our club remains at the heart of our community for generations to come.

### **Senior Rugby Report - Adam Fletcher**

There has been no competitive season in 2020/21 due to Covid-19 restrictions. However, a couple of friendly fixtures of an adapted game have been played, and won, against Wirral and all systems are now go for the new season with pre-season training starting. Pre-season matches include a Cheshire Cup fixture against Winnington Park and the league season starts with a home fixture against Kirby Lonsdale on 4 September.

There have been concerns that the pandemic would have a detrimental impact on player numbers but it is not looking that way with the vast majority of the senior squad, including some most of its older members, retained. A lot of new players joined for last season which means there is a lot of depth in the squad. This will allow rotation during what will be a demanding season.

John Millington, who has worked on the coaching team for at least the last 8 years, has stepped down due to work commitments. Curtis Langdon was capped for the first time by England last weekend. He has signed a new 3 year contract with Sale Sharks which will allow him to stay in the locality and continue as part of our coaching team.

A big 'thank you' to the Exec and all the club members for their excellent support of the senior teams. Everyone is now looking forward to getting back on the pitch in September.

As an amateur club playing in a league against semi-professional teams it is important to have the feed of players from the M&J section where Will Hind is doing a great job. The Academy approach and coaching input from the senior squad plays an important role in getting this continuity.

The 1st XV has entered the Cheshire Cup and have drawn Winnington Park away. It will possibly be a Friday night fixture on the August Bank Holiday weekend. The winning team will go through to the semi-final.

### **Mini & Juniors Rugby Section Report - Will Hind**

Membership and contribution from M&J is growing and strong following the Covid-19 disruption:

- Players (5-18) - 345
- Social members (parents) - 476
- Membership fees - £30,900
- Two key club sponsors and a host of team sponsors to follow.

In a disrupted season where effectively 2 years of colts have ended their M&J Journey in something of a whimper rather than a bang there are some great signs of rugby coming back to the M&Js. Sunday mornings have seen a limited amount of revised rules rugby matches until the beginning of June and training has continued for most teams since then (in a revised ruling from the RFU for this year only). A limited number of friendly matches will be permitted in August as pre-season.

The Academy is moving forward very well with active squads in U16, Junior Colts and Senior Colts who will all train in an overlapping scheme on Tuesdays with the Senior Colts overlapping with the Senior Squad training. More specific training and individuals in the first team are being co-opted to come and give experience as well. We are intending to advertise the Academy approach this summer and to put some support behind it to bolster the approach and hopefully capitalise on some of the players in the vicinity who are falling victim to their club folding but the Colts section wanting to continue to play. Our sole focus there has to be retention. Dave Simpson noted the previous success of merging with Ashton on Mersey at U16 level. Will recognises this but at the moment most of the bigger clubs do not want to do it.



Typically, the U11 to U15 also train mid-week and the biggest issue we face there is around getting space on the AGP once the nights draw in and floodlights are needed – essentially this means 5 teams into a very limited time on Thursdays unless we pay for more training time.

We are encouraging all coaches to undertake as many courses as possible but the safeguarding and introductory ones are all obligatory pre-U10 and RFU Level One is pushed for over that.

We hope to get some support from the regional RFU and Sale Sharks throughout the year to drive recruitment and retention throughout and in particular to try and get more referees!

Thanks go to all the coaches for each age grade, to John Case for his work on GMS and the website, to Jonathan Cartwright for social media support on the M&Js, to Ralph Tucker for so manfully ploughing through the safeguarding. Extremely special thanks go to Paul Wardle who is the M&J fixtures secretary as well as AGP co-ordinator and 'pitch allocations chief'. The work he does is extra-ordinary and M&J would not survive and be as prosperous and growing as it is without him.

Despite a lot of prompting there has been difficulty in getting people to complete match reports for local media. Simon Plumb offered whatever help he can give and John Cartwright also noted Lymm Radio's interest in getting coverage into the local community.

### **Touch Rugby Section Report - Jonny Cartwright**

The Touch Section has some 60 members with players currently representing North West England in Junior, Ladies and Mens categories and England Over 40s and England Over 50s. The section has also recently won the Manchester Summer TMV league.

### **Squash Section Report - Richard Membery**

Given the nature of the game, squash has been very badly impacted by Covid-19 with play shut down completely for many months. However, the membership numbers have stayed fairly steady and the section has now formed its own committee and is looking to engage more closely and make a positive impact on the club. The section intends to increase its activities to include racquetball and offer more coaching and referee courses and perhaps a Junior Academy for younger players as well as developing closer links with rugby and tennis.

There are 3 teams of 3 players entered in the out of season social summer leagues and one team will be entered into the North West Counties league next season.

Richard thanked the club for its support in getting the leaking roof mended, and the Squash members who contributed to, and undertook, other general repairs to the courts. He also thanked Peter Assit for organising and captaining the teams and Darren McCann for continuing to work successfully with the Juniors.

Alan Wilkinson asked whether any progress has been made with multi-sport membership fees. This is an action on the Exec which will be closed off before the start of the season.

### **Tennis Section - Pete Radcliffe**

It is just a year since the Board approved the purchase of the Manor Road site and the new Tennis section was formed. An EGM was held to satisfy the constitution of the Manor Road Tennis Club and certain conditions from Warrington BC and subsequently all members transferred to Lymm Rugby Club. A welcome letter was issued and tennis was promoted within the Rugby Club with discounted tennis memberships being offered.

There has been a limited season due to the pandemic although tennis has got off relatively lightly compared to some sports. The section has a total of 83 members with 49 going for coaching sessions with club coach, Martin Gleave, during the last year.

In September, a business plan was presented to the LTA who have approved in principle a £250k interest free loan over 10 years to build 4 new courts with floodlights on the Beechwood site. They have a preference that at least 2 courts are covered in the winter, which will require some infrastructure during development. The Tennis section has chosen Tiger Turf surface and presented a Business Case to the Lymm RFC Board for the development. A decision has been deferred whilst awaiting approval of the Planning Application for development of the Manor Road site.

The LTA has put back its requirement for the covering of the new courts to 2023 and agreed a loan repayment holiday for 12 months. This meant that where previously it was hoped the new courts might be available this year the earliest date is now 2022.

Playing resumed on 29 March when some lockdown restrictions were lifted. This coincided with the scheduled start of the summer season and league and social tennis started in April. The section is running one team in the Ladies league and 2 in the Mens with a Mixed league starting shortly and is promoting a Wimbledon-inspired marketing campaign while tennis is getting good coverage and offering a 25 % discount on fees.

Thanks go to the Rugby Club and especially the Executive for the genuine welcome and help that has been given to the new tennis members.

The Tennis section has sponsored a picnic table and special thanks go to the Management Committee - Keith Moss (Chair), Yvonne Halford (Deputy Chair), Stella Connor (Membership), Susan Howarth (Treasurer) and Roy Kettle (Secretary) for their efforts over the year. The section is looking forward to fulfilling its vision of having a thriving section, physically playing tennis at Beechwood with a new Clubhouse as part of the Lymm Rugby Club family.

### **Hockey Club - Julie Antonelli**

There have been some recent changes in the organisation of the Hockey Club, with Julie taking over as Chair and Katy Aber as Vice-Chair supported by Ollie Thornton (Treasurer) and Lynn Pyman (Secretary). The club has around 120 senior members, running 3 mens and 4 ladies teams, and 120 juniors. It has been badly hit by the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2020/21 season ended with only a small number of fixtures being played and the leagues pronounced null and void. Play resumed at Easter with some competitive friendly games, summer leagues and some junior fixtures.

The club has been financially challenged. The home pitch at Lymm High School pitch has been declared unplayable so the club has had to find alternative pitches. Income was hit hard during the year but with some shrewd accounting, cost control and a revised membership structure the club has returned a small surplus. There has been some income from fundraising but an application for a Sport England grant has not been successful. The local MP has been helping to raise the profile of the club in the area and with Sport England. The club is working with the High School in respect of what happens at the end of life of the all weather pitch. The future playing situation remains difficult as new all-weather pitches in the area are moving away from sand-based surfaces to ones not suitable for hockey.

On a positive note the Ladies 1<sup>st</sup> team are competing in the England Hockey Plate competition final at the weekend. [Secretary's note: Lymm won 4-1] and Julie noted the club is looking forward to working more closely with the Rugby Club and getting some normality back where we can all interact again and enjoy the sports we love.

### **Club Development - Dave Simpson**

The development programme has its foundations on the purchase of the walled garden, planning approval for a new Clubhouse, tennis courts and 14 houses on the estate as well as the acquisition of the MRTC site from Warrington Borough Council. Progress has been slower than planned but hopefully there will be a better end product. We are now close to getting planning approval for 4 houses on the Manor Road site which will make a significant improvement in the financial position of what is a project of more than £3.5M.

With the larger scope we now have a developer who we can work with and is prepared to help with the cashflow we need to build the new Clubhouse. It has been agreed to enter into a period of exclusivity with the developer and jointly go back to Warrington BC Planning with a revised design for the new Clubhouse, which would have smaller footprint to accommodate the provision of infrastructure for covered tennis courts. The upper floor of the clubhouse will be similar in size to what has been planned and will cantilever over the wall of the walled garden to bring it closer to the pitch. The developer also wants to amend the housing plans and it is hoped this can all done by variation to the scheme with 6 months being allowed to get it approved. Warrington BC are very much behind the project which will see an increased level of sport into the green belt in Lymm.

Increasing building costs are of concern and once we are locked into a deal with the developer our income will be defined but building costs will continue to rise. The new Clubhouse is of modular design so it can be constructed in phases to help mitigate the risk. It is the aim of the programme to complete with a manageable level of debt if any at all.

The timeline is broadly to start building in mid-2022 with tennis available in mid-2023 and the new Clubhouse ready for the 2022/23 rugby season.

The Chairman thanked Dave Simpson and Dave Newton for their efforts on the development plan and this was echoed by the meeting.

### **Election of Officers/Directors**

There were no nominations for new Directors and the current Board members were all willing to stay in post for a further year. The motion to re-elect the Board was proposed by Will Hind, seconded by Jim Knowles and carried. The Executive Officers for 2021/22 are therefore: Chairman - John Cartwright, Treasurer - Andy Leach, Secretary - Rick Johnson; Non-Executive Directors: Mal Pritchard, Dave Simpson, Tony Wright.

Due to the impact of Covid-19, the Past Presidents have decided that the current President, Neil Kelly should be allowed to extend his 2 year term of office. Neil noted that within a few months of taking on the role the club steward of 20 years retired and coronavirus struck causing the curtailment of the first season and cancellation of the summer marquee events and Christmas panto which are the club's biggest income generators. This forced the Club to adopt an entirely new business model with no income or opportunity to earn. In these incredibly challenging circumstances the commitment of the Executive and the Board as well as the membership over these past 18 months has been nothing short of miraculous. One of the strategies has been membership growth and this must continue if the new business model with the new facilities is to thrive for the next generation. Neil noted the one disappointment he has is the lack of new blood coming through into the management of the club and encourages people, especially younger members, to come forward and take up roles on the Executive and Board. He closed with special thanks to the tireless efforts of the Exec and Board over the last 12 months.

### **Any Other Business**

Tony Wright reported that Pete Hayes's wife Linda had sadly passed away. The meeting expressed its sincere condolences to Pete and his family.

Neil Kelly noted the club is organising a Family Day for the British Lions 2<sup>nd</sup> test against South Africa. This represents a great opportunity to come back to Beechwood.

Jim Knowles said he has been a member of the club since 1968 and the ambition he noted then is still glaringly obvious today. The club is very fortunate to have those managing the club with such personal qualities of integrity, loyalty and professional skills and wished to thank them all on behalf of the membership.

The Chairman noted 'The Dewhursts of Beechwood Hall' book written by John Lord is available to purchase at £10 per copy with all profits going to the club.

Rick Johnson  
Secretary, Lymm RFC