

Lymm RFC Ltd

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

21st May 2020

Present

Mike Adams	Neil Allen	Kerry Anderson	Steve Ashall	Chris Askew
Chris Barrett	Bev Bealing	Adam Bray	Keith Broadbent	Lorraine Brodrick
Aimee Cartwright	Colette Cartwright	John Cartwright	Jonny Cartwright	John Case
Lionel Cockayne	Rick Condo	Peter Cornelia	Andy Davies	Len Davies
Rachel Davies	Paul Foulkes	Adam Fletcher	Ian Greenwood	Mark Hesketh
Will Hind	John Hopkinson	Dan Horton	Rick Johnson	Neil Kelly
Jim Knowles	Curtis Landgon	Guy Larkin	Andy Leach	James Lewis
Paul Maguire	Danny McNicholl	Peter Millachip	John Millington	Dave Newton
Malcolm Pritchard	Paul Rigby	Steve Rule	Dave Simpson	John Walman
Jordan Widdrington	Alan Wilkinson	Tony Wright	Kate Yeomans	

Apologies

Alan Cummins	Mark Davies	David Dickinson	Paul Johnston	Simon Plumb
Andy Rushton	Rob Sparkes			

Welcome and Introduction

The Secretary, Rick Johnson opened the meeting by welcoming the attendees to what was the 3rd AGM of Lymm RFC Ltd. The meeting was being held virtually because of the restrictions imposed on public gatherings due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

[Secretary's note: The main reports were circulated in advance to keep the meeting as short and effective as possible. They are contained in these minutes in italics with comments raised during the meeting added in regular text.]

Previous Minutes

The minutes from the previous AGM were accepted.

Chairman's Report - John Cartwright

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the Lymm RFC Annual General Meeting for season 2019/20.

Not so much a "Game of two halves" but a "Season of two halves"! Who would have ever thought that, in our 60th Anniversary year as a rugby club and with a brand new AGP at Beechwood, we would be locked-down in our own houses communicating, like tonight, by video conferencing facilities and with an uncertain view ahead of us with regards to the future, both generally and more specifically of the game of rugby!

Before I turn to the activities of our beloved club over the past 12 months, I want to take a moment to reflect on the impact of Covid-19 on members of our own local community and the wider UK community and beyond. On behalf of

the club, I offer our deepest sympathy and condolences to all those families that have lost loved ones to this dreadful pandemic. I am sure you will all take a moment to join with me and think of them at this very difficult time.

I would also like to acknowledge the hard work, commitment and bravery of all the front-line workers who are risking their own health on a daily basis to manage the pandemic and save the lives of fellow countrymen. I am sure you were, like many others, outside your houses at 8.00pm this evening, applauding and acknowledging our front-line workers; Doctors, Nurses, Paramedics, Ambulance crews, Firemen, Police and many more.

I am sure we will speak of Covid-19 again this evening as it is influencing everything we do in our private, professional and social lives, but now I would like to turn to the more traditional aspects of our AGM and the activities of Lymm RFC over the past 12 months.

Once again we have been fantastically supported by all our members who provide a volunteer force that is the envy of many clubs. Lymm RFC epitomises the very essence of a “Members Club” - an establishment run by the members for the members. Over the past 6 or so weeks that support has been very evident and I am sure Andy will update you on the details of the financial impact in his report.

As is my want and pleasure, I would like to acknowledge the support that I have once again received and enjoyed over the past 12 months:

- *A huge thank you to the Executive Committee who have once again made the role of being Chairman easier and on most occasions an absolute pleasure. Last year we saw our President, **Dave Newton** retire from his role at the end of his 2-year stint, to be replaced by another great clubman, **Neil Kelly**. As the past Presidents expected when they elected him, Neil is making a great contribution to the operation of the club. As you would expect, Dave continues to support the club in our development activities and in this respect he is never too far away from the details, ably supported and complemented by **David Simpson**; thank you both!*

*At this point I would also like to thank **David Linton** and **Kevin Dobbs** who both stood down from their roles on the Exec in December. Both have demonstrated a great commitment to the club and will be missed in their Exec Committee roles. David will be recognised for his commitment over a number of years to developing the commercial aspects of our Club and Kevin for his generosity as a club sponsor and as the man who made a significant “physical” impact on the inside of the club in 2019, which is very clear for all to see (if we were allowed inside!). I sincerely hope we see both David and Kevin actively engaged in the club in the future.*

- *As you will be aware, **Rick Condo** retired at the end of 2019, following 20 years of unstinting commitment to the club. I would like to record our thanks to Rick at this AGM for everything he did in support of the club and the many successful events he was a part of.*

*Our new Bar Manager, **John Walman**, took up his role in February and during the short period before the lockdown, he started to demonstrate a capability and commitment that we can all look forward to in the future. With the Club House closed to social activities, John has been able to continue the refresh of our social spaces started by Kevin. I hope it is not too long before you can all meet John and taste the products of his labour, both over the bar and through the food he creates. A big thank you here also to the Bar Staff! Throughout my time as the Chairman, our club has been well served by a willing group of local youngsters, many of them children of our members, who have grown in to valued young adults and who have benefitted from the experience.*

- *Thank you to **Kate Yeomans**, who, in her role as our financial controller provides a critical function that is essential to managing our operational structure and associated finances. This is especially important at this current time when we have to watch every penny of our outgoings but Kate has also been instrumental in finding new opportunities to increase our income which Andy will highlight in his report.*
- *Thank you once again to our **Old Forkers**, with Chris Askew taking up a lead role. Yet again they have managed to keep our pitches in excellent form despite some atrocious weather and this year have contended with some significant changes to the layout and location of our main grass pitch and the introduction of our AGP. This has added additional responsibilities for the team, especially during the construction phase of the AGP, but as you would expect, they have risen to the challenge.*

- Thank you to all **our sponsors** who continue to provide a much-needed income stream to the club. Without your invaluable support we would not be able to achieve everything that we do achieve. The impact of Covid-19 will be felt by all in our community and we will continue to work closely with all our sponsors to support them and to see if they are able to continue to support the club during the incredibly difficult financial circumstances that we all now face.
- 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 the club in the way that you do.
- Thank you to **our playing membership**, to all players who turned out to represent our teams in 2019/20; Senior 15-a-side rugby, all our M&J Rugby teams, players from the Touch Rugby section, our Squash players and our Hockey players – well done to each and every player who has turned out for their respective team. Sportsmanship and the playing of sport remain at the very heart of what we are all about. Growing our playing membership in all areas is critical to our future success, never more so than now. I will leave it to the respective leads in these sections to update you on their season's activities.
- Once again, thank you to **Adam Fletcher and the coaching/playing management and player care staff** at all levels, without your continued support for the players we wouldn't have such a successful playing record.
- Thank you to **our non-playing membership**; Honorary members, Life-members, VPs, social members and all our partner members. Thank you for your continued support off the pitch, on the touch line, in the bar or at one or more of our social events.
- Thank you to the **wives/partners and girlfriends of all players/volunteers** – an often forgotten group within our membership and I hope one where we will see a growth in their presence at the club. This year I again saw a growing number of player partners coming to matches to watch the games and afterwards in the club house to enjoy the social aspects of our club. I sincerely hope this will continue post lock-down.
- And thank you once again to **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.

I hope I have not forgotten any specific individuals or groups and thank you to each and every one of you!

I would now like to draw out a few highlights of 2019/20, which hopefully are relevant and will be of interest:

Rugby – Once again playing in the Northern division, we experienced a less stressful finish to the season than 2018/19, however, it was cut short by Covid-19. Our performance prior to lockdown was excellent, with the players enjoying the experience of our new AGP and this ensured we finished the season with an excellent mid-table position. I will leave it to Adam and Will Hind to fill in the detail of the 15-a-side Rugby action across the age groups.

Summer Events – In 2019, we once again held a series of social events in a Marquee, this year in the walled garden due to the construction of the AGP. These events enabled us once again to generate a healthy surplus to invest in our capital projects and included;

- Sportsman's Dinner
- Family BBQ and Rodeo
- Ladies Lunch
- Vaudeville evening
- M&J Awards day
- ... and a number of Corporate events

A very big thank you to David Newton, Colette Cartwright, Simon Plumb, Mal Pritchard, David Linton, Phil Carroll and all the other volunteers who helped to make the 2019 summer events such a great success.

For obvious reasons, sadly there will be no Summer Events in 2020. Just prior to the lockdown starting we had discussions with our main corporate partner for the marquee events, Deloitte. Without any clear details of the health

and social impact of Covid-19, even at that time the commercial risk of committing to the summer events programme was too great and we took the difficult decision to postpone until further notice. Our discussions with Deloitte were very positive and there is a very good chance that we will be able to welcome Deloitte staff and their families back to Beechwood in the future to enjoy the excellent welcome and hospitality that we create.

A further and disappointing impact of Covid-19 on our social events this summer is the postponement of our 60th Anniversary celebrations, which were due to take part in the marquee, and a formal opening event for the new AGP. I emphasise the word “postponement” here, as we still intend to celebrate these very important milestones as soon as we possibly can.

Panto 2019 – *Once again Simon, Hesky and the cast put on a fantastic performance in - “Spank and Stein” - which raised an incredible amount of much needed revenue; circa £30,000 for club funds. This does not include the bar takings over the 8 performances, which was also excellent. Many thanks to everybody involved for such a great effort. At this time, it is not possible to confirm whether we will be able to undertake the Panto this year or not, but long may it continue when social distancing is a thing of the past!*

General Social activities – *prior to lock-down the number of social events at the club was increasing, benefitting both the attendees at the events and our financial surpluses from which to continue our exciting development plans. As a result of Public Health England (PHE) and RFU guidance, the club house facilities are shut and will remain so until this guidance changes. This will have a significant impact on our ability to create the income we need to operate, and I am sure Andy will provide a more detailed view on this during his Treasurer’s report. In the meantime, we will keep everyone updated through the relevant channels.*

Club House Development Activities

Notwithstanding the current impact of Covid-19, this year saw the completion of our AGP. A critical initial phase of our overall future development plan. This milestone follows on from a number of significant developments at Beechwood over many years, including; the purchase of land and the development of our grass pitches, the construction of professional standard floodlighting on Pitch 1, the purchase of the walled garden and now an AGP to be proud of!

The completion and handover of the AGP was a tremendous milestone for all of us and provides a springboard for the future. Demand for access to the facility was very positive during the first few months of operation, with all elements of rugby at Lymm and many other Rugby and Football clubs benefiting from this excellent community facility. The management of the AGP has created some challenges for many aspects of the clubs operations and its volunteers. The continued hard work of a few dedicated people has been critical and I would like to once again place on record my personal thanks and thanks on behalf of the executive and membership for their continued hard work – especially to Dave Simpson, Dave Newton and Andy Leach, Neil Kelly, the Grounds team and Paul Wardle. Paul has taken on the unenviable task of managing bookings of the AGP on behalf of the club. Paul provides an important link with the RFU Rugby365 team.

Our vision and ambition to see a sustainable rugby 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 sport 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 do not yet know what the long-term impact of Covid-19 will be on any of the sports played out of Beechwood, but we are closely following the developing guidance provided by PHE, the RFU and other constituent bodies. The current advice remains unchanged, with no competitive activity planned for the foreseeable future. We will continue to monitor the guidance being provided as it develops and keep you all updated via our website and other channels of communication.

What has become very clear over recent weeks is the overall challenge that Rugby Union faces at all levels of the game and the differing views that exists at these levels. Many of you will be aware of the concerns that are being voiced and the impact that professionalism at a National and International level is having at the level that we play at and below. Covid-19 may well be the trigger that will bring this debate in to context and create a sustainable future where we can grow Grass Roots rugby in a way that attracts more players to the game and their families to the Rugby community, for all ages, gender and ability.

Covid-19 has had a major impact on our plans and created uncertainty that we will now have to deal with. Until we have clarity with regards to the future as a result of Covid-19, and the wider aspects of the game of rugby, our development plans are on hold. In the short term, our focus must be on the safety and well-being of all our members ensuring that, when lockdown is sufficiently removed, we are in a position to open our doors and continue to deliver a fantastic sporting and social experience at the very heart of our community.

Over recent weeks, members of the club have responded fantastically to our requests for support with an excess of £20,000 being raised to bolster our cashflow for the coming months. As committed members and volunteers your help is needed more so now than ever before. So please do continue to support your club and encourage others to take an active part to help sustain the future of Lymm Rugby Club for another 60 years!!

The Chairman invited the President, Neil Kelly, to add any further comment. Neil expressed the view that never in the history of the Club have we faced such difficult financial and logistical challenges. The response we have made so far as a group of members is extremely encouraging but there is no doubt there is a long way to go and it is going to take a sustained effort for the Club to get through the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. There is the prospect that there will be no rugby played at the Club in the 2020/21 season because it is difficult to see how a physical contact game can be played at amateur level without a vaccine or certainty of testing being available. So there may well be a long, difficult period that could take us to 12 months from now and as such the membership is going to have to pull together, rally round and maintain the efforts that we have been successful with so far.

The Chairman concurred with this view. It is hoped we will be able to re-open the Clubhouse but this presents its own difficulties given the requirements of social distancing and the physical space available to us. When the UK Government makes further announcements on relaxing the current restrictions the Club will keep the members informed once we know what we are allowed to do and how we are going to implement it.

Treasurer's Report - Andy Leach

Fellow members and friends, it gives me pleasure to present my first 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 provide a useful structure.

Financial control environment

Over the past 12 months (ignoring Covid-19 for a moment if I may) there has been considerable change in the way that we operate as a club and how our finance function supports our activities.

Kate Yeomans was recruited as our Finance Manager in early 2019, an appointment which at the time had my whole-hearted support, and has made a considerable difference to our ability to control, manage and forecast our finances. We have introduced our card loyalty system; changed our banking relationship from Barclays to Handelsbanken; moved to a hugely efficient online banking system; installed a new till system; streamlined massively our ability and timeliness in receiving GiftAid; reassessed our bar pricing policy; and made sure we have complete visibility of our liabilities and collected our debtors on a timely basis.

Our reporting has improved significantly. We are able to produce monthly management accounts within a few days of the month end; for the first time ever, we prepared a full budget for the year to June 2020; we are able to regularly and easily re-forecast at points during the year; and we are able to produce acceptably accurate short-term cash flow forecasts.

None of this is rocket science and to the casual observer may seem like "financial management 1.01" but having the time to implement this in a wholly volunteer-run environment is incredibly difficult, and it has been vital that we had Kate in situ to drive these changes through. I am especially pleased to be able to report that at our last meeting with Handelsbanken, they went out of their way to congratulate us on the quality and timeliness of our financial reporting and financial management. For my part, it has been great to work with Kate over these past 12 months and I am happy that our membership can have complete confidence in the financial controls, management and reporting systems that we now have in place. Further enhancements will now come, but we are building from a strong base.

Corporate structure

A few years ago we were advised that we needed to change our historic structure – that of an unincorporated entity (a Trust) with CASC status – into a corporate structure. There were a number of reasons for this, in particular, it was (i) a RFU requirement for ongoing support; (ii) needed to limit members liability; (iii) necessary to navigate changes in CASC rules; (iv) required to maintain VAT exemption for fundraising activities; and (v) helpful in maximising GiftAid opportunities.

We have been moving slowly on this journey over the past 3 or 4 years now, being careful not to trip up on one of the many complexities on the way. I am now able to report that we reached the end of this particular road in November 2018 when the final step – the land transfer from the old club to Lymm RFC Limited – completed. At this point I'd like to register my thanks to Brian Leyland, Tim Hamilton and Paul Inman, each a member of the club who gave their time on a pro-bono basis applying their tax and legal knowledge and networks in navigating us through the complexities of this restructuring.

To recap, 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.*
[Secretary's note: re-election of the directors is an agenda item for the meeting].
- *Undertakes all our rugby related activities and owns all our land and buildings.*
- *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 fundraising events, including the panto and marquee events.*
- *Each year, any surplus created is donated to LRL, avoiding any unnecessary tax leakage.*

Lymm Garden Limited ("LGL")

- *A limited company, wholly owned by LRL.*
- *Has a board of directors currently comprising John Cartwright, David Simpson and Andy Leach.*
- *Is presently dormant.*
- *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 2019

The annual accounts for LRL, a copy of which is attached to this report – together with the accounts for LBL, LGL and the old trust - were approved by the Directors on 19 March 2020 and were filed at Companies House before the deadline of 31 March, with the Charities Commission before its deadline of 30 April and with HMRC before its filing deadline of 30 June.

As I trailed at the 2019 AGM, the results to 30 June 2019 were going to look rather odd as the final part of our restructuring - to transfer our land, net of associated debt, for the old trust to Lymm RFC – would be treated for accounting purposes as a donation in the hands of LRL. Given that the value of the land net of debt at the point of transfer was £871,575, this would serve to create a huge and somewhat artificial surplus for year in LRL.

As can be seen from the accounts of LRL, the surplus for the year to 30 June 2019 was £840,353. 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 consolidated accounts. 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 and, for 2019 only, the old trust. The effect of this is shown below:

	2019	2018
	£'000	£'000
Donations	23	31
Subs	77	75
Sponsorship	21	23
Bar surplus	28	46
Panto surplus	27	23
Summer events surplus	34	24
Direct costs	(51)	(31)
Gross profit	159	191
VAT partial exemption	(8)	8
Establishment costs	(36)	(30)
Playing costs	(53)	(47)
Grounds costs	(17)	(9)
Lease and repair costs	(8)	(11)
Manager costs	(19)	(19)
Accountancy	(12)	(5)
Miscellaneous	(7)	(1)
Donations made	(6)	(7)
Finance costs	(23)	(25)
Depreciation	(6)	(8)
Total costs	(195)	(154)
Surplus/(deficit)	(36)	37

On the face of it, a surplus of £37k in 2018 has moved to a deficit of £36k in 2019, albeit taken together, we have broadly spent what has been generated over this two-year period. Areas worthy of particular note are:

- I would have expected the VAT partial exemption adjustment to have been negligible in both years. An adjustment of this quantum appears most likely to be a cut-off error which has, as a consequence, overstated both the surplus in 2018 and the deficit in 2019 by £8k.
- The increase in accountancy costs reflects our investment in this area.
- Grounds costs increased in 2019 due to the impact of adverse weather on pitch conditions.
- The increase in playing costs was spread across travel costs, kit and coaching fees (+1 coach).
- The bar surplus reduced significantly over the period. Although margin had been declining for the past few years it fell from 45% in 2018 to 24% in FY18, a significant fall. Rather than spend too much time delving into the reasons for this (the stock figure at end 2018 of £24k looks implausibly high to me), we instead elected to rebase all our prices during the current season reflecting current costs and an acceptable gross margin. Our new till system will also provide, on a daily basis, granular margin information that should allow the early identification of any anomalies. In addition, we have negotiated an improved deal with Carlsberg which should feed through in the current year's performance. Hopefully, barring the impact of Covid-19, we should see a bounce back in the bar gross margin going forward.

Adopting a similar methodology, the aggregated balance sheets at 30 June 2019 were as follows:

	2019	2018
	£'000	£'000
Fixed assets	1,501	1,487
Stock	7	24
Debtors	55	89
Cash	45	56
Creditors	(101)	(127)
	6	42
Borrowings	(576)	(562)
	931	967

Things to note here are:

- All but £25k of fixed assets relate to freehold land and buildings.
- Creditors and debtors are high at 30 June each year as the impact of the marquee events, which are held in mid to late June, has still to fully wash through the balance sheet.
- Borrowings comprise a £28k interest free loan from the Rugby Football Foundation, which is being repaid at the rate of £7k per annum, and a £548k loan from Handelsbanken.
- The Handelsbanken loan is interest only, at 2.75% over LIBOR, maturing in January 2022 at which time, depending on the status and progress of the Clubhouse Development Programme, the expectation is that it will be either fully or partially repaid and/or converted into a longer term facility.

We undertook the exercise of cleaning up our balance sheet at 30 June 2019 – writing off any receivables we were not completely confident in receiving and adopting a similar approach with payables – such that we are very confident that we have entered the current year with a “clean edge”.

Year to June 2020

As mentioned above, for the first time that I’m aware, we have a budget in place for the current financial year, covering all aspects of our revenue streams and cost categories. As a club, our objective has to be to generate a small surplus each year which then gives us the ability to invest in our facilities for our members.

This budget, which in particular set ambitious targets for revenue generation across events and sponsorship categories, showed a surplus for the year of c£30k. By the half-year, this surplus outturn had been revised down to £20k and at the end of February, when we were still experiencing “business as usual”, we were broadly on target to achieve this re-forecast. However, as we know only too well, the onset of the Covid-19 crisis during March has driven a coach and horses through these plans.

During the year Handelsbanken agreed to make a £75k overdraft facility available to us. Of this £50k was “earmarked” to cover the cost of the AGP enabling works that we were required to cover under our agreement with the RFU, whilst the remaining £25k was in place to help accommodate our sometimes difficult to predict cash inflows over short periods.

Impact of Covid-19

Clearly Covid-19 has had, and continues to have, a significant impact on all our day-to-day lives, both at home and at work, and how we interact with one another. The impact on our club was swift and significant, effectively stopping all activity for the last three months of the financial year – traditionally a period when, through our summer marquee events in particular, we generate a significant proportion of our annual surplus. My estimate is that this has cost us somewhere between £40k and £50k over these final 3 months.

Faced with this situation, the Executive has moved quickly to eliminate all unnecessary spend, mothball the clubhouse and generate as much revenue and cash as possible. To this end, we have now eliminated all but basic expenditure, received a £25k grant from Central/local government, received a £3k grant from the RFU and raised close to an incredible £23k from our “Your Club Needs You” initiative. This £23k, which has been funded by almost 100 different club members, comprises - loyalty card top ups, life memberships and donations together with the associated GiftAid.

In addition, LBL is in the process of applying for a £50k Government guaranteed Bounce Back Loan – 6 year facility, first year interest free – to provide additional liquidity for the club through the 2020/21 season which, I have no doubt, will be incredibly challenging from a financial perspective as it is difficult to predict when our two traditionally strongest revenue streams – bar/events and sponsorship – will return to anything like historic levels. In the meantime, we will need to continue to manage our costs and cash flow exceedingly carefully.

Whilst we are now at another exceedingly challenging point in our 60-year history, I have no doubt that with the strength of our membership, the passion of our players and the commitment of our volunteers, we will emerge stronger and more united for the experience.

The Treasurer also reported the door has been closed on a Sport England grant at the moment and in any case we may not be eligible as we have the £25k from the Government. However, Sport England have just launched a new scheme with crowdfunding that we are looking to apply for. They will match funds up to £10k raised by the Club providing there have been 100 people making the contributions. With Gift Aid this would mean the £10k raised would provide a £22.5k donation into the Club's war chest. We will be sending out messages in the near future and would like to get the monies in before applying so that the submission is effectively underwritten which would make the process easier.

The Government has just raised a further scheme and we will continue to look at all of these. We have every confidence in our ability to succeed. We have a great membership, passionate volunteers and committed players to help us through. We are in a better position than many other clubs around the country and could come out the other end much stronger as a Club.

Tony Wright thanked Andy and Kate for the magnificent job they have done in getting the accounts sorted out. It was never going to be an easy task but they have done an excellent job. He also thanked Andy for his excellent report to the AGM.

Dave Simpson added that in terms of fund-raising there has been agreement in principle with a caravan operator to use the car park for caravan parking while we are not using it. With a £300 retainer plus £100 per caravan per month there is a significant amount of money to be gained if we can fill the space. If we can't finalise agreement with the caravan operator we could perhaps do this ourselves.

Senior Rugby Report - Adam Fletcher

First of all I'd like to thank everyone that contributed to the 2019-2020 playing season. The support the squad and I received from the club was massive and is truly appreciated. Hopefully we repaid that support with our performances on the pitch.

Positives

- 38 players were used with 28 coming through the Colts academy.
- 2nd XV finishing top of the league - beat everyone in the league except Caldy with the highlight being a resounding 70 points victory over Fylde at Fylde. Peter Millachip has done an outstanding job.
- 1st XV finishing 7th in a highly competitive league - the highlights being the performances against Billingham and Blaydon at home.
- AGP has had a positive effect on the quality of training as well as regular numbers attending.
- Eagles are remaining competitive although being placed in a league against 2nd XV teams. Great job again from Martin Henderson.
- Senior players have been helping to coach the M&Js and strong bonds are being formed.
- Response to Covid 19 - a lot of players have topped up their membership loyalty cards. A poker night has just started with half the funds raised going towards the club.
- University students returning to play - we are very fortunate that a lot of our students return to play on a Saturday. It's been a huge positive for both the 1st and 2nd XVs to have these players available.
- Senior playing membership numbers are up.
- There is a good relationship with the Colts through Dave Simpson and Kerry Anderson and with Lymm High School through Lee Pickles.
- The majority of the squad have been retained for 2020-2021 and recruitment of new players is going well.

Areas to improve

- *Discipline - We were summoned before Cheshire RFU again due to poor discipline. From Colts all the way through the senior section we need to improve. I will be looking at ways over the summer to improve discipline. One of the ideas is that all players sign a code of conduct. Fines have been talked about for poor discipline but with being an amateur club we have to be careful what those fines are. This is work in progress .*
- *Senior Membership - Although much improved it still isn't perfect. Especially now we need to make sure everyone is on the correct membership and that players are being chased up if they are not paying. This is for all players that play senior rugby.*
- *Numbers at training - the AGP has seen a slight increase in numbers but we are still down on numbers from a few seasons ago. There are reasons for this, the main one being the number of players away at university. I will be working hard to get the average number higher for next season.*
- *Integrating Colts players into the senior squad - playing more regularly on a Saturday. Hard to achieve due to school and Colts commitments but something we are keen to work on.*

Areas of Concern

As you are all aware we became a three team club this season. This was a really hard decision to accept but unfortunately we just didn't have regular players to make four teams work on week-in week-out basis. Below are some of the current issues and what we need to do to reignite a third team.

The issues we face are:

- *Currently there is no one to organise the team.*
- *The League schedule is too onerous - social players struggle to commit every week.*
- *There is a perceived stigma attached to being a 3rd/4th XV player - young lads want to play 1s or 2s.*
- *Gaming, social media, football and socialising mean there is much more than rugby on offer.*

What we need to resolve these issues is:

- *Find a young, recently retired 1st XV or 2nd XV player with time on their hands and contacts.*
- *Arrange monthly fixtures to start (1st year) until we build up a database of committed players.*
- *Have some Friday night fixtures which gives players the weekend to spend with families.*
- *Ensure we provide the environment for a good social scene.*

Adam expressed some concern about the potential impact of a prolonged period with no rugby next season especially with respect to some of the older players who may not play again. We have a strong squad for next season with some new players from local clubs approaching us to join. The young players from last season are all staying and are only going to get better. The coaching team are keen to get going and if we get rugby next season we will be aiming for a strong performance in the league.

The Secretary congratulated Adam and the players on their commitment and standard of play over the past season and also asked the meeting to recognise in particular the efforts of Adam Bray, who is standing down after an outstanding 5 years as Club captain, and wish him all the best going forward. There has been no decision made yet on next season's captain, but Tom Bray is a likely candidate perhaps with one of the younger players as a vice-captain. Adam Bray confirmed that he is not retiring from playing but feels it is time to step down with a new generation of players coming through. There is a leadership group within the squad and but it is important that the captain is assured of his place in the team.

The Chairman asked whether the players are managing to train now that some of the constraints of the lockdown are starting to ease. Adam responded that he expects one of the fittest squads the Club has had. They are in the 3rd week of training remotely with running and strength challenges being set each week. The squad has really bought into the concept and, with a competitive team element being used, the results are very encouraging.

Mini & Juniors Rugby Section Report - Will Hind

The year as a whole, what there was of it, was successful. With the grass pitches severely impacted by the amount of rain from December through to February and then Covid-19 we have had a curtailed fixtures. We have managed to share the AGP between teams but this has been a juggling act. Without the AGP we would have had very few games. Huge thanks go to Paul Wardle, for managing fixtures and the pitch allocations, and who has been helped tremendously by Tom Seabrook.

There are 350 players registered and thanks to a sterling job by John Case the data of the club is much more robust. We have a very clear idea of players and families. We are keen to encourage more engagement and the two big challenges that we face in the section are family engagement (which helps with the whole CARDS approach – namely creativity, awareness, resilience, decision making and self-organisation) and player retention through into the senior game.

To aid the second issue I was selected for, and in theory taking part in, the Irwin Mitchell sponsored mentor programme to look at how we as a club can enhance the pull through (we are though starting from a high base) and some of the initial findings we saw were interesting – such as a big turn off for teenagers is to have poor refereeing so one of the resources that was going to be enhanced referee courses available to our coaches/parents. With the RFU staff now on furlough I am unsure what is happening with the programme.

The first issue with parents is a continual question and one we, as a club, must address. Clear differences and positioning of the Rugby club need to be made (with associated benefits) to differentiate from football clubs with no grounds or clubhouse, and leisure/sports clubs. Continued focus on the “members club” has had little effect.

Will expressed his thanks to the many parents, carers and guardians who support the M&J section.

As well as a curtailed season, Will noted that the number of Colts games had been reduced because clubs are finding difficulty in fielding teams and therefore the leagues are smaller. This is an area of concern that we need to watch going forward. The academy approach of having senior and junior colts and under 16 teams training with some overlap has been tremendously successful and helped us to keep continuity and interest at that level.

The Treasurer added his thanks to John Case for his work on getting the data in GMS into good order. This has been a long and arduous task.

Will noted that the RFU has now confirmed its intention to continue the mentoring programme focussing on the continuation of Colts moving on to play senior rugby.

There has been some interest expressed in women's rugby and this is something we need to assess going forward.

There is some concern about the lack of time available to the M&J section on the AGP with local clubs making block bookings. The Chairman noted that he thinks the block-booking by Warrington is probably a hang-over from last season and is likely to be wiped out. The RFU staff are currently furloughed but when they come back there will be a regional meeting before the AGP re-opens to agree how the non-Lymm RFC use of the AGP is allocated.

Dave Simpson noted in his experience it is essential to get the Colts introduced into the senior squad before they go off to college or university and one barrier to continuity is a fear factor and the lack of camaraderie between the two groups. We need to find ways to bridge this so when they get on the pitch together this is all behind them and the younger players understand and are bought into the culture of the senior teams. Exhibition matches with local clubs could help give them this experience. We have been lucky with the recent group of players but it is likely to be more of an issue going forward. Guy Larkin noted that there are transition weeks in the calendar that we need to target. There is an RFU safeguarding requirement that has to be met and we should get players registered at the start of the season.

Curtis Langdon supported the idea of getting the juniors training with the senior squad and Andy Davies noted that some of the 1st XV players are spending time coaching and mentoring junior teams and hopefully this will help in future years. There was general agreement that this is not just a training and playing issue but there also needs to be a social integration and increased communication between senior coaches and junior players.

Touch Rugby Section Report - Jonny Cartwright

Lymm Touch Rugby continues to be a source of enjoyment for members from all areas of the club, including senior players, vets, minis, juniors, coaches, parents (mums and dads) as well as some Alikados!

The AGP has allowed us to stay at the club year round (current situation excluded) and not have to use external facilities. We currently self-fund hire of the pitch on Thursday evenings.

No official fixtures or tournaments entered as the competition element is a summer sport and Covid 19 has prohibited this.

Jonny added that the introduction of the AGP, with the additional benefit of not having to re-locate during the winter, has seen an increase in numbers with around 23 participants from all areas of the Club.

Squash Section Report - Alan Wilkinson

Somewhat of a mixed season - like all sports the North West Counties Squash Leagues 2020 winter competitions were cut short – the latest I've seen on the NWCSL website is that remaining games are hoped to be finished by December 2020 but, if it takes that long, the following season will be curtailed to one match per pair of teams.

On the playing side, the Squash Section First team were relegated from a 3rd Division at the end of the 2018/19 season (the highest they'd been for some years) and subsequently lost a couple of players who preferred to play at the higher level. This, together with work-related commitments (the squash balcony can be a good place to fall ill, considering the abundant availability of medically qualified practitioners) has led the team to struggle somewhat in a 4th division, although well clear of relegation at the time of the league curtailment. A knock-on effect of the second team frequently losing players to the first team has been a similar result in their 5th Division, where they've been playing on a social basis for several years.

Thanks are due to Peter Asaad for organising the first team; Roger Longman for organising the second team (despite frequently playing for the first team) with help from Andy Curries amongst others; Darren McCann for managing the Squash Academy (some of whose attendees are asking serious questions of experienced players at the Squash Club nights); and Steve Turnbull for keeping the courts in a playable condition.

The condition of the balcony roof continues to be a cause of concern, as does the inability to attract and retain lady members.

Alan noted that team performances were not as good as they would have liked but there are many people who are helping the Squash section progress. The Chairman added that a local roofer is due to have another look at the leak above the squash court balcony.

Election of Officers/Directors

The following were nominated by Chris Askew and seconded by Steve Ashall and re-elected to the Board for another year:

Executive Officers: Chairman - John Cartwright, Treasurer - Andy Leach, Secretary - Rick Johnson;

Non-Executive Directors: Mal Pritchard, Dave Simpson, Tony Wright

Any Other Business

There were no items raised. The Chairman thanked the Secretary for his efforts over the year and for organising the AGM in this way for the first time.