

# **Lymm RFC Annual General Meeting**

**12<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

## **Chairman's Report**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Members and Friends,

Welcome to the Lymm RFC Annual General Meeting for season 2021/22.

One year further on and thankfully we are starting to see a return to normality – or at least to a “new normal” that is likely to be with us for a number of years to come as we grow out of the Covid Pandemic era. Since our last AGM we have enjoyed a full season of Rugby, Squash, Tennis and Hockey at all levels and this has rekindled the interest in related social activities that will hopefully once again create a strong foundation for our future operational and development activities. Our treasurer, Andy Leach, has produced an excellent report for this AGM that highlights the impact of “Covid restrictions” on our normally buoyant events-based income streams. Not surprisingly our members were (and perhaps still are) apprehensive about returning to the traditions of large social gatherings and other factors associated with Covid have removed some of the platforms that supported these events. However, the buzz in the club house has grown louder at the weekends throughout the season and a steady increase in our members returning to Beechwood, and our away fixtures, is now evident. One great example of this was the Past Players event on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, which saw a very full club house for our fixture against Blackburn – one of a series of excellent victories as the season came to an end. The buzz was certainly evident for that event and I am hopeful that this will continue into the new season.

Sadly, society is still impacted by Covid 19 and my thoughts go out to all those who are still suffering from this impact. Thank you to all our club members and the fantastic front-line services that continue to support our families, friends and the wider community. During the past year several families associated with Lymm Rugby Club lost loved ones, many of whom were fantastic club members, supporting the club over many years. Our thoughts and prayers are with them all and I would like to acknowledge absent friends here, which include; Geoff Evans, Lionel Cockayne, Harvey Thornton, James Hutchings and Bob McCulloch.

I would now like to turn to specific activities over the past 12 months from my perspective as Chairman. As ever and especially this year, the opportunity for me to thank all those members, volunteers and staff who have contributed to our ongoing success, is a great pleasure. The agenda items included for today's AGM will provide more specific details in a number of these areas and I will leave it to those better informed than I to provide the detail.

In September 2021 we were looking forwards to a new beginning and to building on the platform that we had created in the previous one and a half seasons under the Covid cloud. Unfortunately, our Club Steward, who joined the Club at the start of the pandemic, handed in his notice after the first full weekend of Rugby activity and we found ourselves without the leadership to manage the operational activities that are essential to providing the services required across all sections of the club. As you will have observed and experienced over the past 12 months, this hiccup in September 2021 did not derail our organisation, quite the opposite. Thanks to the excellent support from members and volunteers alike, we have been successful in delivering quality services to our membership, with minimal impact. I would specifically like to highlight

here the efforts of Aimee Cartwright and my wife Colette, who during the initial weeks in September took on the challenge presented and rolled up their sleeves, and to Rick “Rock” Condo for agreeing to return to take on the role of Club Steward, for as long as necessary. In the early part of the season, Aimee recruited a number of new members of staff and trained them to create a core service team. Thank you to all members of this team for their commitment and hard work – the impact of Covid on the hospitality sector made recruitment of the skills that we needed very difficult but not impossible. I hope our young team can develop their skills and experience at Lymm Rugby Club over the coming years for the benefit of the club and for themselves.

I would also like to formally thank the Mums and Dads of the M&J section for their support on a Sunday morning to cook and serve bacon butties and hot drinks from the Half-way House. Spreading the volunteer support across the various age groups throughout the season minimised the impact on “the few”, whilst creating a really effective service to members and visitors alike.

The loss of our steward at the start of the season was totally unexpected and the number of suitable candidates available within the hospitality sector at that time was surprisingly lower than expected. What we initially thought would be a short recruitment process, was not. In this process we were supported on a volunteer basis by a local recruitment specialist, Richard Bailey, who is based in the village centre. Thank you, Richard! Richard provided experience and access to various recruitment databases and through his support we were able to secure the services of Alan Troy as our new Club Manager. Alan brings with him a significant level of experience, a passion for hospitality, a desire to take Lymm RFC into our new future and a drive for quality. Welcome Alan, I look forward to seeing your passion and aspirations deliver change and positive progress over the coming years.

As ever, a huge thank you to our **Executive Committee** who have once again made the role of being Chairman easier. We have had 1 change in role on the Exec over the past year, that of Chairman of Touch, with Jonny Cartwright stepping down and Matt Cawley taking the reins for the section. Welcome Matt, Touch rugby continues to grow and develop and I hope we will see further growth in player numbers for this format of rugby over the coming years. Thank you to Jonny for your commitment in developing and Chairing our Touch section over the years.

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!

As a club, we are blessed with members who are prepared to offer their time as general volunteers and in specific roles, such as those evident in the exec. However, we always need more volunteers, but we don’t always know exactly what new roles may be needed. So, my request to all our members is, if you think you have a skill or experience that could benefit our club, please do put your hand up and let the executive members know. If we identify specific area’s where we are seeking additional volunteers we will advertise for your support – keep your eyes open and help to create our future.

At last years AGM we were looking forward to the possibility of some of our traditional “big” events coming back as a reality. Much to the relief of both cast and guests we were able to host our Panto 2021 – “Aladdin Lymm”. A huge thank you to the **Panto Cast and support team** for their sterling efforts. With a much-reduced audience of 96, in a Covid safe configuration, we delivered 9 shows over 3 weekends. The 2021 Panto created a £20k income stream through ticket sales, plus a much need boost of income from the Bar. Well done to everyone involved.

Unfortunately, the Marquee events for 2022 have not materialise, hopefully they will do in 2023. As an alternative, we will be undertaking 2 events during the summer months within the club house. These include a “Ladies Lunch – *in the evening*” event on 1<sup>st</sup> July, and a 3-night Vaudeville run on the 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> July to replace our normal marquee based activities. Details of both events are posted on the website and social media.

Once again a huge thank you to all our **Old Forkers** for their continued effort in maintaining the pitches and keeping the grass, plants, weeds and trees in check. Their sterling effort ensures that the sports played on our outdoor surfaces are played on the best quality surfaces. Feedback from all levels and age groups has been excellent throughout the season.

Thank you to **all our sponsors** who have continued to support the club. Sponsorship is a critical income stream that benefits both the Club and the Sponsor. As we progress out of the pandemic this aspect of our commercial operations will become even more important. If you are minded to or know of other people or companies who would like to become a sponsor of our club, please do let one of the exec members know. For the 2021/22 season, a huge thank you to **Tony Burgess** for his generosity and to **Challenge-TRG** for theirs. Challenge-TRG have committed to being our main sponsor for 2 more years.

As ever, and as mentioned a number of times above, 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.

With the easing of restrictions, season 2021/22 has seen a return to a more normal environment for all our sports sections. On behalf of the executive and wider membership, 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 sport later in the agenda.

Thank you to our **non-playing membership**; Honorary’s, Life-members, VP’s, social members and all our partner members, including all **wives and partners, girl and 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 pays testament to their commitment to our club – Thank You!

As we discussed at last year’s AGM, Covid-19 slowed down our new club house development activities and for many reasons, this has continued throughout the past year. However, progress has been made and David Simpson will provide an update which will set out our future plans and timescale and give some context to the impact that Covid-19 has had on those plans. At this point, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Dave Simpson, Dave Newton and Pete Ratcliffe 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.

As you will be aware I have decided not to stand for re-election as Chairman this year, which I will admit was not an easy decision on my part. Having served on the club executive for more than 17 years in total; firstly for 2 years in the 90's as club secretary and more recently for 15 years since 2008, as Treasurer and Chairman, I have decided it is time for me to take a step back from the front-line operational activities of the club and give other committed club members the opportunity to bring their experience, ideas and commitment to driving the club forwards.

I am extremely proud of what we have achieved over the past 15+ years and the opportunity that I have had to play a part in that achievement. I have been associated with Lymm Rugby Club for more than 47 years as a player at all levels, as a volunteer committed to driving success and more recently as the Club Chairman. Throughout this period some of the, off field, achievements that stand out for me are;

- The implementation of a state-of-the-art flood light system on our main rugby pitch
- Transition from a club with one main grass pitch to a club with 3 senior level pitches and 2 junior level pitches, all within a single boundary
- The implementation of a phased development plan capable of creating a sustainable future for Rugby and other sports at Beechwood
- The implementation of a state-of-the-art AGP in conjunction with the RFU
- Participation in our Annual Panto over a 15-year period
- Participation in the initiation and growth of our "Summer Marquee" events as a funding stream for our development programme.

On the pitch I am very proud of the achievements of our playing activities, whatever the sport and at whatever level. With regards to Rugby we have achieved a huge amount over the past 15 years and have stuck to our primary ethos of being a professional club that "does not" pay its players – I personally hope that this continues in to the future and we continue to provide an effective platform for young players from Lymm and the surrounding community to achieve their potential within our club and also at higher levels where their skills dictate. Based on our achievements to date there is no reason why this will not happen.

Over the past 12 months I have seen the start of the rugby experience for another generation of Cartwrights, with my Grandson Jack and his younger brother James enjoying themselves in the walled Garden on a Sunday morning, under the guidance of my son Jonny as one of their committed coaches – happy memories and another generation begins the rugby cycle.

Finally, it would be wrong of me not thank **my wife Colette and all my family for their support and patience** over this extended period – without their support I would not have been able to undertake my role as Chairman of Lymm Rugby Club – it has been a privilege!

Thank you!

**Your Club, Our Community, Their Future**

**John Cartwright – Chairman Lymm RFC**

12<sup>th</sup> May 2022