

Howe of Fife Rugby Football Club

Annual General Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 July 2020

On Zoom at 19.30

Welcome: President Chris Reekie in the Chair welcomed members and thanked Neil Winton for setting up the meeting.

Attendance: 33 Members attended on line.

Apologies: were received from Dave Rollo, Jonny McGinty, Brian Imrie, Forbes Catto, Lindsay Petrie, Kirsty Wilson and Mike Black.

Minute's silence in memory of deceased members: Allan Booth, Jean Rollo and George Penrice.

Approval of Minutes of AGM 2019: The minutes of the meeting of 20 June 2019 were accepted as true minutes proposed by Neil Winton seconded by Delia Manson.

Matters arising from the minutes of AGM 2019: None

Trustees Report. The season 2019-2020 has been one we shall never see again. After a good start with our new coaching staff the virus has plunged us into a situation which will take all our efforts to recover from. However we have been well served by our President, Vice Presidents and Trustees. Our finances continue to take up a lot of our time and we are grateful to those members who have donated substantial amounts. We have continued to have open Trustee meetings and I hope more members will come along and see how we operate as we are in need of new Faces. The function suite has done well but we must continue to seek more bookings. Fundraising has again been important to assist with income and we thank all members who have given their time to this. As you shall see from the balance sheet we cannot let up on these efforts. At this time we have no inkling when rugby will commence but we will be faced with new challenges both on and off the field. JGR.

President's Address This has been a challenging few months to say the least, but it looks like there is some light at the end of the tunnel. But we must continue to be aware of the threat that exists. I hope our Members are staying healthy and safe during this unprecedented time in history. My sincere condolences for any families who have suffered both physically and financially during this time.

The Murrayfield Threat Management Group have been at the top of their game providing support and current information on a regular basis to assist all clubs in approaching a phased return to domestic rugby. Whenever that may be.

In terms of the financial challenge we face as a club, the impact of Covid-19 has halted the steady progress made by all the trustees, staff and committee groups in controlling expenses and maximising every opportunity open to the club. I would like to pay special thanks to Russell Cockburn who has worked diligently as the sole Director of Trading, acting as Treasurer, while also taking on the membership secretary role. Individually they are significant jobs, compounded together they form the backbone of our rugby activities. Russell deserves every credit for his enthusiasm and commitment in a very demanding role. We have a new Membership Secretary in Rachel Thomson, who Russell will work closely with in transferring the role.

As we move forward, membership will be crucial to establishing a firm footing for the year ahead. We must all encourage past, present, and future members to take up a membership, encouraging those who have lapsed. In this way you are not only helping the club, you are seen to support the rugby community which has given so much enjoyment.

In terms of rugby it was disappointing for the season to be cut short, with all results null and void. During last Summer, the Howe welcomed new Head Coach, Gavin Emerson, and, the newly formed Crusaders, re-entered competitive rugby in the Midlands Regional leagues. Both have grown over the months before lockdown. We have watched a young 1st XV, play some entertaining rugby, all with a smile on their faces. The increase in supporters watching is a reflection on the enjoyment they gave.

Unified Rugby is another section of the club which gives so much enjoyment. Karen Mitchell and all those involved must be congratulated for the work they continue to put in, giving playing opportunity to those who probably never thought they would get the chance. For me this is where Howe provides real value as a community rugby club.

The Harlequins in National 1 did remarkably well against some particularly good teams. Here is another section of the club where there is always fun and laughter. With playing restrictions at present the women's earlier season start will be delayed.

The Knights managed around 12 games before Covid, including tournaments one which was the inaugural Knights tournament, raising funds for local mental health charities. Fixtures are organised for the future. The lockdown will have given some old bodies time to heal.

With Youth Rugby the club is never short of smiling faces. Neil Winton and the coaches continue to provide the foundation of future players. We are lucky to have Logan Robertson as Youth Development officer, someone who engages and enthuses the youngsters throughout the district to take up rugby. Within some age groups there is a concern over playing numbers. Focusing on and implementing a plan to drive numbers up is an on-going challenge.

Thanks are due to our 1st XV sponsors Utility ROV Services, local companies and individuals who have supported the Howe this season. Now more than ever their continued support is essential. As a club it was disappointing to have to cancel our Annual 7s, and a chance to show the Howe's appreciation and say a massive thank you to them all on that day.

It has been a massive collective effort by so many to operate the rugby club. Laura Anderson and the bar staff work hard to make the facility a venue somewhere more and more people, groups and organisations wish to utilise. All the volunteers and helpers, who give up their time, to make the Howe, a positive and welcoming environment. Looking beyond Covid-19 there is so much to be incredibly positive about. It is with much appreciation and thanks to all those contributing to the way ahead. Too many to thank individually.

Many challenges lie ahead in a changing sporting environment. We must look ahead, prepare for the new normal and be ready when rugby is back on our sporting agenda. Rugby as a team sport delivers many attributes and qualities. Most importantly it provides social and emotional interaction, a place for sharing at a time when it is critical to everyone's wellbeing. 'Growing the Game' continues to be the focus of all activities, providing the enjoyment we get from the game.

Financial Report The headline is that the club has an operating surplus of £6126 compared with £9106 last year, however there are differences which I would bring to your attention.

Trading – a much better performance than we achieved in the previous years since moving into the new clubhouse.

A surplus of £11061 c.f. a loss of £1804 last year.

The café no longer being a financial drain on the club has helped. Bar turnover is up £22372 due to the increase in the number of parties and functions although margins have slipped slightly. The decrease in wages is due mainly to not having to pay for a café manager but wages continue to be our biggest overhead.

Laura and her team have performed well during the year and have contributed significantly to these results.

Charity – a poorer financial performance than last year a loss of £4933 c.f. a surplus of £10910.

However, when we add back Depreciation, the Charity still had an operating surplus of £14298.

Income – Donations and legacies down £14704, Income from activities up £18637, with income from subscriptions increasing by £8430 and SRU participation and grants up £4439 but events down £10073.

Expenses – mainly in line with last year but two items require comment.

Wages – up £5161, we now have two coaches who receive payment, the head coach and our community coach who works through the local Primary Schools and whose position is covered by grants. The increase would have been greater but Gavin only became a direct employee part way through the year and £3000 of his cost is included in Playing Expenses.

Playing Expenses – up £8033, Coach (above) Buses up £1365, First Aid and Physio up £2774

Cash & Bank - our net bank overdraft has reduced to £17287 from £31503 a decrease of £14216 and in addition £8398 of loans have been repaid. This reflects the operating surpluses of both the Charity and Trading and our aim to be debt free.

Looking Forward – the season had not finished before we were hit by the Covid lockdown. We have lost approx. £28000 of gross income so far, with no Ladies Day, Howe 7's, Rugby Camps, Fife Show, cancelled functions and no outside bars at the Ceres and Cupar Games. The loss of this income has been offset by assistance from the SRU and the Corra Foundation. Expenses however continue to be incurred and paid for, Insurance, Water, Electricity, Telephones and Broadband, and wages currently offset by Government furlough payments, but our bank facility is finite and we will need income from subscriptions if we are to make it through to when rugby begins and we can operate normally once again. Russell Cockburn, Treasurer

Neil Keddie queried the reference to family membership being 2+2 – he thought that numbers had been removed last year. His recollection is correct and family membership will have no numbers.

Alan Hendry asked what the take up of paying by standing order was. He was told that it was substantial and was used by all sections of the Club.

Innes Petrie asked how successful the 100 Club was. He was told it had 58 members but if the new Club Lotto took off the 100 Club may be discontinued.

Gavin Anderson was assured that in the new season no coach will be allowed to coach until he/she had paid their subscription.

In the light of present and foreseeable circumstances Trustees recommended leaving subscriptions at last year's levels.

Neil Winton proposed and Grant Robertson seconded that this is agreed – no dissent.

Rugby Reports - Senior - My first priority upon joining the club as Head Coach was to try and create an inclusive ethos at the club, by bringing together a divided senior men's section along with the Harlequins for the first time. I had meetings with the three teams and listened to their thoughts and feelings and realised they all identified similar barriers. Before I started a formal pre-season, I ran 4 weeks on conditioned games which were open to all, as a result we had up to 50 senior players which regularly included 15/20 Quins players. The players all gradually started to mix and bond and soon last season's 1stXV, Crusaders and Harlequins all became the Howe Senior players, this continued throughout the season which regularly saw the men and women doing Thursday run throughs against each other.

To encourage relationships and improve transition between the U18s and the senior men, we would also run against each other on Thursday evenings. We found this very useful for both teams and it will only benefit the club in the long run, especially for U18s when they make the move to senior rugby.

Coaching - With the 1stXV and the players coming together as one, so did the Coaching team. We had Ryan Venters from Glenrothes as backs coach, Ian Manson leading up the Crusaders and eventually taking on the role and Senior Men's Team Manager and Stewart Lathangie as defence coach. I would like to thank the coaching team for their hard work this past season, without their support and thorough work this season would not have been as successful as it was.

I would also like to thank Craig Manson and Neil Winton for their support to the Crusaders on game days.

We were also very lucky to appoint Courtney Ferguson who is a qualified physiotherapist. Courtney would run a weekly clinic for both senior men and women, enabling us to keep the senior players on the pitch as much as possible; whilst maintaining a 'player safety first' approach

Training

Training numbers were very good, averaging around 30 across the season and as it went on, we were regularly having the starting XV for both 1stXV and Crusaders at training on a Thursday. This allowed both teams to be in the best possible position for the following weekend. I regularly asked the player group for feedback on training to ensure we kept training fresh and player led. This seemed to work well as players were always keen to be at training and the numbers proved this.

Player Development

To enable players to take charge of their own development, I asked the players to all pay £5 per month for a subscription to Coach Logic. I would then load all game tape to our own site within Coach Logic. This would allow the player to analyse their own and the team performance, in order to feedback to me with positives and areas for development. In addition to this, I provided all players development feedback forms to complete and to be returned to the coaches, from this I would have a one to one development meeting with each player. Due to Covid 19 we could not complete the meetings.

Covid 19

Due to Covid 19, the season was unfortunately cut short. To keep the senior men connected and ensure their physical and mental wellbeing were supported, the players held regular zoom get together social meetings and have maintained contact via Whatsapp. I contacted Fraser Allan and he (free of charge) posted daily workouts which were shared on the Men's and Women's Facebook pages.

I had individual end of season debrief phone call with all those who played last season, I found this very worthwhile to hear how each player found the past season and to discuss their plans for next season. It also provided an opportunity to touch base with their wellbeing due to the current circumstances in an informal way.

Gavin Emerson

Howe Harlequins – It's been a tough year with a few challenges however we have developed Year on year for the 6 years we have been playing.

Our start against Stewartry wasn't the best but a fairer showing at home showed we had moved forward and had gelled as a team.

Heriots were a team of superstars that didn't seem to be happy coming up against a strong but under number Howe team. A roasting hot day provided us with great running rugby but Heriots put us away at the end. When they visited us they were fully in control and showed the class team they were.

Annan at home was the most nervous I had seen the current team, once on the field we calmed down and the tries kept coming. Annan away was the closest finish I have ever seen, luckily it was us that managed to pull it back in the dying moments to claim a draw. We got out of jail that day after a poor 60 mins!

Broughton Home and away threw everything they could at us but we were too strong for them, Oban found this too. God I hate that bus journey!!

Glasgow Uni succumbed to us both home and away, we finally beat them! And then we get to Gairloch.....

What can be said about Gairloch. I really feel we have the beating of them but I think our fitness always shows against them. We hold them to a strong game for 40 mins then they seem to change into another gear. Hopefully this season we will show them what we can do!

Our cup run seemed daunting to many within the team which led to many cries of why did we place fourth in the league, this is going to be so hard!! I saw it as a test of our metal!

Cartha was a game we could have won, Gairoch again, our fitness held us back at the end. The game that we really showed our abilities was against Watsonians. This was a game they thought we were going to win at a canter. Oh how wrong they were! The Howe Harlequins really showed us what can be done against the best team in Scotland.

4th in National 1 is not to be sniffed at, especially when you realise finishing at this position, the Howe Harlequins are now one of the top 10 teams in Scotland.

Thank you to Emma Wood for her two fantastic years as Captain. You have led us well Emma, leading by example on the field and organising things off it. Thanks also go to our Vice Captains Phoebe and Beth who continue in this role as we welcome new Captain Kirsty Wilson. Thanks also go to Chris Reekie, Cordelia Manson and the rest of the Trustees for their continued support.

Thank you to our coaches, Kath, Scott, Liz, Gavin Emerson and of course Ian who we welcomed back this season. You all keep the team on the right path and have brought a huge amount of knowledge to this team. Gavin Emerson and Cordelia Manson have worked incredibly hard this season to ensure the Quins are no longer looked upon as the women's section but part of the senior player squad. We train together and share resources when possible. We are stronger as a club because of you.

Dave Davies deserves a huge round of thanks from us all, he tapes us all up, puts an arm around us when we are down and keeps the refs up to date on the offside laws! Thanks for everything you have done for us Dave. A Quin for life!

The 20/21 season should be a strong season for the Quins, we have a new leadership group that has been created to take more ownership of the team, make more decisions and enable the players to feel the team is theirs. This Season will also be my last as Lead Coach. I have enjoyed being part of this phenomenal team and have enjoyed many highlights but at the end of the season it's time to let some other voices be heard and lead the team forward. I tell you this now so that the club and leadership group have time to find that new voice or voices.

Players player Megan Reid

Most Improved Player Nikaila McRither

Club PLayer Of The Year Becca Martland

Craig Manson.

Mini and Youth - 19/20... certainly will not be forgotten in a hurry for many reasons. With the early finish to the season we were not able to do much in the way of fundraising, or utilising the money we had raised during the previous season for things such as training equipment or social events. Having said that, we have begun planning for whenever we return to welcome back our returning players and also welcome any new comers to the club. We, like all other divisions, had to cancel many of our games but with careful planning for the season ahead we have got 4 large tournaments, including our own to look forward to at the end of next season and a number of close to home friendly fixtures to get the kids playing again in season 20/21. We have got a great team of coaches in the minis, who I'd like to take the opportunity to thank for the time and effort they dedicate to the kids each weekend. Nearly all our coaches have achieved their UKCC level 1 and some hope to gain their level 2 when it becomes possible to do so. A huge positive for the minis this season, was the increase in new players coming to the club. Many newcomers came along from other clubs within the county, despite having another club close by they decided to make us their new 'home' and are very welcome. With the addition of these players we also saw players come along for the first time

or returning to the game, who had participated in the school rugby trials during P.E with the clubs development officer - Logan Robertson and Olly Davidson. The parent group this year established a 'kit swap shop', which many parents took advantage of in order to kit their kids out. We will continue this next season in the hope of helping to keep kids in rugby and to help new players get set up. A successful T's&C's team were running a car boot coffee stop on Sunday mornings, this too has been successful and we look to continue this. Hopefully with the start of the season we will be able to engage more parents to get involved in helping their child's club and grow the parent group that helps fundamentally in easing the financial pressure on the club for costs arising from the minis division. With the numbers up, funds in place and a continuing parent group we are pleased to see the club coming through this tricky time and we look forward to getting back to the game in due course

Our youth section enjoyed some good matches this year we had a touring side from Argentina attend duffus park along with glenalmond for an exciting night of rugby which was well attended

Howe of Fife RFC - S1

End of season report

Numbers are the same as they were at the end of last season. Although we have lost 2 players - 1 away from the game, and another to football, we have gained 2 players to compensate.

The season began slowly with the players getting to grips with the move to a full sized pitch and 13 a-side. A more structured game format. Once we understood our roles within this more structured format, our game came together and the boys enjoyed it more. I'm sure this will continue into next season whether playing as an S2 or under 14 squad.

Our season like everyone else's was curtailed by the global pandemic. As a squad we would have benefited from the final fixtures of the season to really strengthen our squad unity before heading into the off season.

We also had to cancel our end of season tour to Northumberland and matches against Morpeth RFC. We will endeavour to reschedule this as soon as is practical.

During the lockdown the S1 squad took part in weekly quiz nights, created a 'pass it on' video, the whole squad and several parents also took part in 'Fitness Fortnight' which was designed to keep the boys active through this period. Coaches were also posting up homemade skills videos for the boys to try at home.

We also held an end of season awards ceremony via Zoom with the winners as follows;

Fynn - Coaches Player of the Season

Murray - Players Player of the Season

Evan - Most Improved Player

Jamie - Howe Man Award

Greg - Hulk Award

Coaches remain unchanged going into season 2020/21.

Gavin Anderson

Mike Black

Alastair Stewart

It is our intention to try to recruit some new players going into the new season in order to try and maintain 2 teams. This will allow us to maximise game time for all boys in the squad.

S2Howe of Fife S2s 19/20

In brief, hopes were high for another successful year based on previous seasons results.

Unfortunately this didn't go to plan as we lost an ill tempered opening game against Marr.

What then became apparent was different teams approach to age grade rugby, this has been brought up by several coaches from older sections. On several occasions it was literally watching boys play against young men. Results suffered, however attitude among the boys remained good.

In addition 9 boys are attending S@C and there is positive feedback from both the boys and coach regarding development.

One early starter has attended the Cally PDP squad pre COVID.

Our numbers have crept up with several new starts over the season, meaning on several Saturdays we had to pick a squad.

There were notable wins over the course of the season balanced by some disappointing losses.

There is a good turnout to both tues and thurs training with 26 in attendance at one session.

Understandably going forward we are keen to retain all players, we have up until now been quite flexible regarding boys suitable positions as we do not want to pigeonhole players, however it is now obvious that we will have to start streamlining players to roles.

The s3 boys' side have shown great resilience to develop from a group struggling to raise a side to a competitive team of around 20 players.

The season started with the loss of two coaches, Paul Egan, and Mike Cromar, our thanks to them. We also lost several players to a Bell Baxter extra-curricular programme, ironically to develop physical fitness and team building. August and September were particularly challenging with only one coach and 10 players.

A huge thanks to Neil Winton in encouraging other adults to volunteer to coach, their contribution has been invaluable. And a huge congratulations to the players themselves in encouraging new players and former players to return.

In a season mainly played against age group rather than year group teams highlights included wins over Marr College, Glenalmond, and a nail-biting win against Melrose.

Success at local tournaments placed the team in the highest level of competition for the new styled Caley Cup, that due to covid was not completed. A physical challenge for the side, their skill set came to the fore.

Also curtailed by covid was the new Caley district set up. The new 8-week programme was curtailed, with no information yet on its resumption. Six players were invited to the programme and have made a good account of themselves.

We look forward to the new season, this side has already had the opportunity to play with some of the returning u16 squad and there is potential for a super side next season.

Team U-16's season 2019-20. We retained nearly all our players from the season before and added 3 new players. One was a returning player and the other two were new to rugby. We went through the season with a squad of 23 and frequently had players playing for the year below. We had good away wins at Loretto, Royal High school and Robert-Gordons and fulfilled all our fixtures during the season. We played a round-robin of cup games at the Orium and the boys really appreciated playing there. We had good numbers at the Caledonian trials with a couple of the boys selected to progress. Obviously the present situation stopped any further cup action or representative rugby. We also had most of the boys through to an Edinburgh home near the start of the season. All in all up to March it

was a good season with the boys showing a new found maturity and physicality that we hope to carry on with in the near future at under 18 level.

U18 A very challenging season all round. Numbers proved an issue all year with a relatively young squad moving up from u16s to join those remaining from last season's u18s. Away games in particular were difficult due to non-rugby commitments and injuries. However, training numbers were good with most players attending regularly regardless of the weather. For those doing the excellent S&C course from Gil, the benefits on the pitch and at training were clear.

With a generally young u18 age group, on a physical size and maturity basis, every team played was older and larger than Howe. It was to the players' credit that this disadvantage was met with a real positive mental approach, resilience and a physicality that bodes well for next season.

Game highlights included running a very large/experienced Boroughmuir team close away from home with a deleted squad in the school's Cup; an incredible very last minute win v our Argentinian opponents in front of a bouncing Friday night crowd at Duffus; and, being pipped at the final play in the Shield by the eventual winners Earslton HS.

The age group was well represented at the regional level with 6 players in the Caley u17 Academy (Ryan Powles, James Stockwell, Rory Wardrop, Ruan van Rensburg, Henry Clark and Finlay Foulkes) with all going through to the u18 Academy for the coming season. In addition to these players, a further 2 (Logan Parsons and Scott Christie) were included in the selection process for the Academy until lockdown saw the postponement of all Caley activities. It is very encouraging that all 8 players will be with the Howe u18s this season coming. A further 1 player was in the Caley u18 programme (Ollie Davidson) for last season and will be paying senior rugby with Howe this season coming. Of the players not included in Caley's, this is mainly due to choice and/or injury. There is a lot of potential across the whole group. Well done to them all.

Financial Examiner: Henderson Black were reappointed. The Treasurer paid tribute to Jim Hair who oversaw the Club's finances free gratis for many years and now his firm provides this service at cost.

Appointment of new Office Bearers: The President proposed the name of Gordon Douglas to succeed him as president. This was agreed by acclaim. New Trustees nominated were Gordon Douglas, Neil Winton, Gordon Stalker and Ian Manson. They join Grant Robertson, Russell Cockburn, Cordelia Manson and John Arbuckle. Chris Reekie retires having completed 3 years.

Approval of Captains & Vice Captains: Men – Jamie Thomson Captain, Fraser Allan and Jack Todd Vice-Captains. Harlequins – Kirsty Wilson Captain, Beth Robinson and Phoebe Saunders Vice-Captains.

Presentation of Trophies: Cellars Trophy (Utmost Endeavour) – James Lawrie

Stewart Gibb Memorial (Colts Player of the Season) – Rory Wardrop

AOCB:

Cordelia Manson asked about Player sponsorship levels. President replied saying in the circumstances they would probably remain the same as last season.

David Davies said that injury reports from Senior men had not been going to the SRU. This must be addressed or players may lose out on insurance.

Neil Winton reported that Ruthie Mitchell was giving up her post as Mini Co-ordinator. He thanked her for her fundraising, organising and liaising with Laura. A replacement is needed.

Bruce Rollo criticised the Club Website for not carrying up to date news of forthcoming games. The President accepted that and reported that a review of the website is underway with help from Susie Harley.

Andrew Duncan lost his Microphone but wished to put on record his appreciation of the Office Bearers efforts in turning the Club around.

The President proposed that Russell Cockburn be awarded Life Membership of the Club. Apart from his long tenure as Treasurer and more recently as a Trading Director he also took on the role of Subscription Secretary this year. Russell's dedication to Club business over long hours is most appreciated.

James Lawrie paid tribute to Chris Reekie as he stands down from presidency. His efforts over the last few years have been appreciated by the players who are now playing with a smile on their faces, but also by the whole Club where Chris's hands on and vision leave us in a much improved place.