



ECCLES RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

Founded 1897

Ground and Clubhouse: Gorton Street, Peel Green, Eccles, Manchester, M30 7LY
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Eccles RFC Annual General Meeting – Secretary’s Report, Mark Greenhalgh

It has become something of a recurring joke now that the Secretary’s Report is the hardest to write, and there’s no change to that this year. I will attempt to recant the significant events of the last season whilst trying to avoid stepping on the toes of those who will report later.

August

While much work had gone on behind the scenes, the season started proper with the Beer & Gin Festival. This year was another huge success. Thanks to Martin, Marie and the rest of the Social Committee for all their efforts.

Alongside the rugby we signed up Try Talking as our club mental health partner. This championed the cause that it was okay to not be okay, and reach out for help, with discounted sessions for members. As we’ve done before with the Duke of Edinburgh and other initiatives, we were the trailblazers that other clubs and groups have now followed. We will continue to look out for ways we can offer more benefits to our members.

September

As the season got underway in earnest, we were able to unveil our new website. This was largely due to the efforts of Mark Baines and Chris Gaffey, so many thanks to them. The new site offers us both better integration into the rugby community (via GMS) and new functionality such as online membership administration and the selling of event tickets. I’m sure you’ll agree with me that it’s never looked better.

As the mini and junior season started, we really put a focus on engaging with those teams and making sure everyone felt part of the club. We did this with a series of meetings with coaches and parents of all ages where we tried to bring people up to speed with things they might not know. I believe the meetings were well received and something we will look to repeat in the future. Since then we have noticed more junior parents engaging with the club, for example on social occasions, and we hope this continues in the future.

Despite the new season being so young, we were named Salford Sports Club of the Year in respect of our efforts and achievements from the previous year and extending into the summer. This was great recognition of everyone’s efforts across the club. Volunteers from each section were rewarded with seats at the subsequent award ceremonies as a thank you.

October

President: Mark Dutton	07802 345380	Fixtures Secretary: Don Edmondson	07821 683516
Chairman: Paul Thorpe	07766 512552	Sponsorship Secretary: Andy Brunt	07743 825459
Hon. Secretary: Mark Greenhalgh	07525 434790	Communications Officer: Chris Gaffey	07971 817375
Hon. Treasurer: Mike Bateman	07843 756160	Safeguarding Officer: Heather Thorpe	07762 081105
		M&J Section Chair: Paul Fleming	07889 601558
Director of Rugby: Sam Simpson	07935 403171	D of E Award Chair: Mark Baines	07850 082122



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The World Cup provided many great occasions and memories, not least of which was the Final, that was very well attended at the club before the commiserations spilled out into town later on. Thank you to everyone who came down to watch the games with us.



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November

We received another accolade from Club Magazine, being shortlisted as one of their Rugby Clubs of the Year. Our volunteers represented us well at a glitzy occasion in Doncaster. Unfortunately we didn't pick up the award, but learned a lot from the experience.

December

Just before Christmas we debuted our online matchday programmes. Once again, we were the pioneers into a new idea, and one brilliant in its simplicity. Its more accessible to all members, it increases exposure for our sponsors, and removes the reliance on printing. This is certainly something we'll be continuing with in the future. Thanks to dynamic duo Chris Gaffey and Mark Baines for turning this idea into reality.

At the same time we partnered with Oddballs to produce club beanie hats that raised over £500 for the charity and proved very popular with members. Thanks to James Wright for organising.

In the Christmas break we hosted the Christopher Tickle Cup for the 10th time. The occasion was particularly well attended and raised a considerable amount of money for the Nicholls Spinal Injury Foundation. Thanks to Dave Nicholls (no relation) for this and all his work on the Social Committee.

March

After a yearlong campaign, led by Heather Thorpe and supported by Mark Dutton, "Kill your speed" signs were erected on Gorton Street at our request. We wanted to prove to our neighbours that we listened to their feedback, and people driving up and down too fast is the most common complaint. It won't solve the problem by itself, only more consideration from each of us drivers can do that, but is a useful reminder that this is a quiet street most of the time.

The Adult Men's Competition Review (re-)commenced, debating what the game should look like from 2021 onwards. We haven't seen a great deal of meaningful content thus far, but there seems to be a drive to 'flatten' the league pyramid, meaning more divisions at each level and ultimately fewer levels. This means our current definition of "level 7" or "level 8" will change significantly. We expect to learn more as we continue through 2020 ahead of implementation next year.

And then on 16th March the big one happened; all rugby and related activity was suspended because of the corona virus. This was swiftly followed (20th March) by the news that the rest of the season was cancelled and that league tables would more or less stand as they were. This, unfortunately, meant relegation for the Men's 1XV.

April

Since that announcement in March, many conversations had been had (via email and Zoom) about what was best for the team and club moving forward. After careful consideration we took the decision to join the ADM Premier League for the 2020/21 season, and we will review the outcome of the Adult Men's Competition Review after that. While a tough decision to begin with, it seems an obvious one now. Presently there is no Level 8 league in the RFU structure in the NW, so if we'd decided not to join the ADM Leagues, I am not sure where we would be playing. As it stands, we will face a good quality of local opposition while we look to rebuild and strengthen.



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May

As we arrived in May it became obvious that 'lockdown' wasn't going anywhere. With some members expressing some concern about the future of the club, as a committee we attempted to assure people that the club was in a strong and safe position. We took the unusual step of proposing that we all stay in position for the next 12 months to show stability and support during unusual times. Following an email vote, this was almost unanimously supported by the members so was passed. The committee for the next 12 months will be:

Position	Nomination
President	Mark Dutton
Chairman	Paul Thorpe
Secretary	Mark Greenhalgh
Asst. Secretary (& Safeguarding Officer)	Heather Thorpe
Treasurer	Mike Bateman
Senior Fixture Sec. (& County Rep.)	Don Edmondson
Communications & Sponsorship Officer	Chris Gaffey
D of E Award Chair	Mark Baines
Mini & Juniors Chair	Paul Fleming
Social Chair	Dave Nicholls
Ground & Pavilion Chair	Andy Brunt

The election of senior captains was omitted from this step, as we wait to see what rugby will look like in the 2020/21 season. With the Officers in post, we postponed the AGM until July.

July

At the start of July the government and RFU announced that clubs could reopen in a social capacity should they wish to. After much discussion, the decision was reached that we would not reopen at this time. This is due to a combination of reasons, but the main one is that, due to careful financial management and the support of the local authority, the club is on a sound financial footing and will be for months to come. Therefore, we don't think it's right to ask our bar staff to take on avoidable risk just to serve us beer. However, we continue to monitor the situation and things could change in the future.

In lieu of usual preseason training, James Wright and Chris Gaffey have organised the Eccles Peak Challenge, which asks people to get out and do some exercise while raising money for the NHS. This challenge has been warmly received by our members and the local community, including messages of support from Tom Curry and Adrian Morley. There's still some way to go if we're to meet our fundraising goals but overall a very positive exercise.