



Eccles Rugby Football Club

Founded 1897

President: P. Thorpe

Ground and Clubhouse: Gorton Street, Peel Green, Eccles, Manchester, M30 7LY

Telephone: 0161 789 2613

Website: www.ecclesrfc.org.uk

<i>Chairman:</i> M. Greenhalgh 1 Isobel Close Eccles M30 7JG 07525 434790 mark.greenhalgh@outlook.com	<i>Hon. Secretary:</i> M. Baines 60 Algernon Road Walkden M28 3RE 07850 082122 baines.mark@virginmedia.com	<i>Hon. Treasurer:</i> M. Bateman 46 High Street Belmont, Bolton BL7 8AF 07843 756160 bateman10@btinternet.com	<i>Fixtures Secretary:</i> D. Edmondson 43 Coll Drive Davyhulme M41 7FX 0161 747 6697 dwedmondson@sky.com
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Minutes of Eccles RFC Annual General meeting – 4th June 2018

Welcome from the Club President - Andy Brunt

Andy Brunt opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the 2018 AGM and thanking them for the attendance, and showing continued support for the club after what has been a difficult year by many measures. He then handed the meeting over to Chairman Paul Thorpe.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Hannah Tan, Katya Georgieva, Igemi Ekoku, Declan O'Regan, Chris Gaffey, Kevin Walker, Tom Chapman and John Brunt.

Minutes from Previous AGM

Paul Thorpe suggested that the minutes from the previous AGM should be accepted unless anybody had any questions or objections.

The acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Mark Dutton and seconded by Paul Fleming and Don Edmondson.

Treasurer's report - Mike Bateman

The general picture is that we had done well in difficult times, finishing the year with a £13k surplus. Player subscriptions and match fees were significantly down on previous years due to fewer teams and games. The general bar take was strong largely due to outside functions, and particularly the end of year Colts Finals Day and Marquee weekend. The profit generated from international ticket sales was much improved over recent seasons. The kit supply relationship with O'Neills appears to have gone well with fewer costs and the receipt of a "kick back" based on sales made, which was promised but never realised from previous suppliers. The astro pitch continues to be a steady source of income thanks to the efforts of Mark Dutton. We have been continuing to put money into savings for the eventual replacement of the astro pitch when discussions with the RFU are complete. We are also reducing the amount owed to the RFU from previous loans.

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Mike would like to particularly thank Marie Wilson, Greg Wilson and Heather Thorpe for their assistance and support throughout the season.

Mark Dutton suggested that we don't request an accountancy report ("be audited") as this would be expensive and of little value. This was seconded by Greg Wilson and approved unanimously.

Hon Secretary's report - Mark Greenhalgh

For the Secretary's Report, Mark said that he would give a month-by-month breakdown of information probably not covered in other people's reports.

July

The 2017 Beer Festival took place. Overall it was a success but there were some lessons to be learned from it which would feed into this year's in August.

After a comprehensive selection process, O'Neills were selected as our new kit supplier.

August

A pre-season friendly against the army was played, in recognition of the work the Duke of Edinburgh section did on their expedition to the Somme.

With the new supplier on board, the men's section recruited new shirt sponsors and purchased a new kit for the 1XV and 2XV.

September

Two new physios were recruited to the club in the form of Janey and Brogan, and they have worked well with us throughout the season.

November

The club website was hacked, and had to be temporarily taken down for repair works. It has been back online since, but ultimately will need to be repaired which will be investigated over the summer.

Card payments were accepted at the bar for the first time following the implementation of iZettle and the purchase of necessary hardware. This has proven massively popular with members and will continue indefinitely.

December

The 3XV officially withdrew from the league after forfeiting too many games.

February

New insurance arrangements put in place, saving us £300 per year, by not double-paying for cover already provided by the RFU.

The Ladies 2XV withdrew from the league due to difficulties in raising a team.

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March

A feasibility and interest study undertaken to determine best option for marquee weekend. More cost effective methods were discovered and approved, leading to a successful event.

Two tier pricing was introduced for outside functions at the clubhouse to increase bar takings, which overall were down on the year.

May

Very successful social/fund-raising events in the form of Ladies 21st Birthday and Colts Finals Day.

New Head Coach/Director of Rugby appointed for the men's section.

New structure of committee developed for discussion at tonight's meeting.

Long term/Ongoing

Extended lease on grounds to 50 years to open up grant and benefits options with the RFU. This also included bringing "the field" car park under our official use (previously a grey area).

Worked with the RFU on securing funding for the astro replacement.

Mark concluded by thanking everyone who had volunteered at the club this season, but highlighted that many more volunteers were needed to spread the work out.

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Rugby reports

Men - Nick Spooner

It had not been a successful season, and therefore this report would not attempt to glamorise it in anyway. Following relegation the previous season we lost more players and we were unable to replace with players of a similar calibre. That, accompanied with a series of injuries, meant that the team had to chop and change throughout the season, and performances were disappointing as a result. And as a further consequence, the 2XV were often dealing with reduced numbers, and the 3XV folded.

Nick offered his thanks to John Parrott for all the work he has done over the last two years, and was now standing down. He also thanked everyone who had stuck with it and played throughout the season. In closing he said that it was now time to focus on the future, with a new Head Coach appointed, and plan and prepare for turning things around next season.

Ladies - Katie Houghton

The biggest impact on the ladies season was the league restructuring, completely out of our hands. The formation of the Women's Premiership has resulted in us losing a number of our best players. We recruited to bring in more numbers, but the experience lost cannot be replaced. This resulted in a very difficult season where we only just able to avoid relegation. Massive thanks to all the players who dug in towards the end to get the points we needed, and thanks to the club for their support during that time.

Unfortunately the 2XV had to drop out of the league during the season, as it became obvious we didn't have enough bodies to fulfil both sets of fixtures. However we have started recruitment for next season and look to get back to strong numbers in the future.

Thanks to James for his coaching, Nina for team management, and everyone else who has helped out this season.

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Colts - Chris Gaffey, Kevin Walker

Neither Chris nor Kevin were able to attend the meeting, so a written report was read out on their behalf:

THIS SEASON

Senior Colts

- Apologies from Coach Chris Gaffey -unable to attend AGM due to work in London.

Recognition

- At the end of last season, June 2017, Seven U18 colts (and two U18 girls) undertook an DofE Gold Award expedition to the WW1 Somme battlefields.
- As preparation for this expedition they each researched the life of a former Eccles player - young men in the prime of their lives who played rugby for Eccles in 1913 and enlisted along with their mates and marched off to war, full of hope and ambition.
- As a tribute to those men who 100 years ago returned from war to re-build this club, and to their teammates who sacrificed their lives, the young people retraced the journey of the Salford Pals Battalions of the Lancashire Fusiliers regiment through France.
- They walked 30km a day over 4 days, visiting cemeteries on route.
- On 1st July, 101st anniversary Battle of Somme, they arrived the Theipval memorial where they laid poppy wreaths they had carried with them and met the British Ambassador to France and Colonel Boureman.
- In recognition of their efforts, the Royal Regiment Fusiliers played Eccles in a pre-season friendly in August, and last week the nine young people went to Buckingham Palace to meet HRH Duke Cambridge (Prince William) and were presented with their DofE Gold Awards - a great honour and privilege for the club.

Rugby

- Highlights on the pitch however were very few for the Senior Colts this past year:
- In October, we combined our Senior and Junior Colts to compete in the U18 Lancs Cup.
- We were knocked out of the competition, but were only narrowly beaten 19-22 by West Park St Helens who were to become the eventual Senior Colts County Cup Winners.
- With a lack of competitive league fixtures, we lost 3 talented players to other clubs. • Former player Connor James has gone on to make several appearances for Sale Sharks Academy and Leon Simpson was selected for RFU North of England.

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- The plan for the remaining Senior Colts was to get them playing Senior Rugby.
- However, just 7 Colts played about a dozen games for the 2XV.
- 2XV regular defeats and struggling numbers didn't help encourage their participation.
- One Senior Colt was selected for 1XV, but played only 2 games before a shoulder injury led to him missing the rest of the season.
- Shoulder injuries have prevented 2 other colts from playing, but otherwise, injury has not been a significant factor in declining Senior Colts numbers at training or playing.
- Although the DofE programme has kept 7 young men engaged with the club, weekend employment and college commitments are the main reasons cited for not playing rugby.
- Only 3 of Snr Colts who actually played rugby last season attended training - irregularly.
- There is the possibility that a few of these lads will play occasionally next season at Eccles if they attend Universities in the north.
- I'd like to recognise the support the colts have received from the committee during the season, in particular the assistance of Paul Thorpe and Mark Greenhalgh with issues like disciplinary hearings and racial abuse of players. Junior Colts - End of Season Report 2017-2018 Notes here from Coach Kevin Walker.

NEXT SEASON

- We expect the immediate focus of the senior section next season will be a swift return to winning ways for the 1XV and 2XV teams and a committed fight for League promotion.
- We (Kevin Walker and Chris Gaffey) intend to continue our work with the colts section.
- Our focus is on establishing a long-term plan for the club that will strengthen the bridge between the Junior and Senior sections, so the club can retain as many of its enthusiastic home-grown youth players into adulthood as possible.
- Life has changed for typical teenage lads from what it used to be.
- There are many distractions that require less commitment than sport.
- It's now compulsory for teenagers to stay in full-time education until 18.
- Pressure to succeed means college assignments take precedence over training during the week.
- Weekends are no longer free for sport - they are spent studying or working (often in zero-hour contracts).
- Lads are looking for 'casual commitment' rugby where they can make a late decision to play.

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- Parents loose enthusiasm after the lads leave school - transport and registration fees become issues. Faced with getting the bus and paying for rugby out of their own pockets many lads lose interest.
- The weekly carefree 'enjoyment' of junior rugby is abruptly turned into a 'serious' 'abusive' encounter in the Seniors.
- The club must look to address these things or face continued weekly struggles to field Men's teams and the fall in rugby standards associated with this.
- Player drop out at Colts level is typically 50% and the majority of clubs in our region are experiencing the same struggle that we are.
- Eccles is 121 years old, but it needs to have a plan for retaining more of its Colts players if it is to survive and thrive.
- The Eccles Colts are the club's future loyal 1XV and 2XV team players, and they should be nurtured as such.
- We began conversations with club committee in February and put forward our outline proposals for next season which were approved in April.

In summary our recommendations were :

- Formation of a permanent U18 Senior Colts squad. Merging the U17s and U18s teams into a single, combined squad we believe should be the club's default approach. The majority of clubs in the region are doing the same.
- The Senior Colts team should be positioned as the academy team As soon as players join the colts they should be embraced by the senior players and encouraged to see themselves as members of the Men's senior section.
- We need equality and fraternity if the Colts are to see themselves as future 1XV players. At the start of each season the Colts team needs to be issued with the same shirts, match balls, first aid support and equipment as the 1XV and 2XV have.
- Each season a U16 meeting held in March should provide players and parents with advance notice of the expectations of Colts Rugby, where questions and concerns can be answered to avoid touchline gossip.
- Colts rugby can be a heavy burden and needs a team of volunteers The Eccles Senior Colts should have at least two qualified coaches, a team manager and assistant manager, a qualified first aider and a social media manager.
- For 2018/19 season we currently expect a U18 Senior Colts squad of approx 30.

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- To ensure next year's colts keep returning to train and play every week, our focus will be on rugby that is inclusive, ENJOYABLE, challenging and competitive.

When it stops being inclusive, enjoyable, challenging and competitive, the lads stop coming.

- We will compete in the Colts League and in U18 Colts County Cup.
- We will join weekly training sessions with the Senior Players - The focus will be on developing the skills, physical strength, confidence, belief and team camaraderie necessary for their introduction to adult rugby.

The colts will be encouraged to

- think for themselves, make decisions, trust their instincts, anticipate and react to situations, not wait to be told.
- take responsibility with clear communication on and off the pitch, not rely on parents.
- take pride in the facilities of their club and take pride in their membership and appearance.
- respect a squad ethos and rotation system where selection is earned, based not just on ability but attitude, commitment to training and confirmation of availability.
- embrace a set of values - respect, discipline, sportsmanship, teamwork, brotherhood, optimism, commitment, ambition, dependability.

We see these objectives as the foundation of sustainable Colts section at Eccles that will help the club retain more of its homegrown junior talent.

Things we would like to see are –

- Adoption of a Mens Pre-Season training plan for the Colts.
- Consistent principles and brand of rugby that colts coaches can implement.
- Adoption of senior player mentors to pass on position-specific knowledge to colts
- Better communication between colts and senior sections and involvement in selection.
- Reaffirmation of Eccles Club pride

We believe the re-adoption of the club tie and shirt by all senior players, after all games will be a step in the right direction towards rebuilding a strong inclusive team spirit for THE WHOLE men's section.

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Minis and Juniors - Paul Fleming

Organisation:

The Mini and Junior Section continues to be a thriving and growing section of the club. It continues to have teams across all age groups from U6/7 to U16, with girls at U15 and U18. There have been some initiatives to recruit players in collaboration with Sale Sharks and local schools which has had some success at U14 and U15, with a manager and coach from the teams attending sessions with Sale coaches and held at Eccles.

There have been coach development opportunities offered from the RFU and the Sale Sharks 100 club initiative resulting in additional level 2 coaching certification for the club, along with parent volunteers training to be referees and joining Manchester and District Society. Each team has trained first aiders, thanks to Kevin and Heather for organising. All volunteers are DBS checked with Heather and have been encouraged to take the RFU Headcase training course.

The bimonthly meetings of the junior section have continued, received good feedback and have improved communication across the section and also cross-age group collaboration.

Sponsorships:

Some age groups have secured their own sponsorships and fund raising. Well done!

New sponsors have been found for some teams and they have purchased new kits and training tops from O'Neills (thanks to Shelley). The section is relatively self-sufficient due to Heather doing a fantastic job collecting subscriptions, the securing of team sponsorship and team fundraising for other items and tours.

AGE GROUPS:

Junior players have again been selected for Sale Sharks DPP at U14, U15 and U16 and there has been county representation at U15 and U16. An U14 player played the U15 National Schools Semi-Final at Allianz Park and the Final at Twickenham.

U12 and U13 have played in the Lancashire Waterfall Festivals. U13 will move to competitions next season.

U14 played in pool A of the Lancashire competitions and reached the semi-final of the Plate, unfortunately having to play that match with a reduced team due the fixture being played in the Easter holidays when players were on school trips and Lancashire's refusal to rearrange for Eccles, though dispensation was given to other clubs.

U15 played in pool C of the Lancashire competitions and reached the semi-final of the Development Plate.

U16 played in pool B of the Lancashire competitions and reached the semi-final of the Vase.

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TOURS:

There were three outgoing tours and one incoming tour.

The U12 played in the Southport tournament over the first May bank holiday weekend, finishing 3rd out of 12 teams.

The U14 travelled to France and Belgium on the same weekend playing a tournament at RC Mechelen and a friendly match at RC Soignies. They visited and laid a wreath at the Tyne Cot War Memorial at the War Grave Cemetery in Belgium. The U16 travelled to the North East. The U14 hosted an incoming tour from an Irish School, Presentation College. The U15 and U11 played the Alex Hulme Foundation Charity matches at Sale Sharks.

The section is trialling a new format of smaller presentation evenings to replace the Sunday Marquee event in order to make the events less onerous for attendees and volunteers and to raise more funds for the club. (sat 9th June)

THANKS AND GRATITUDE:

Throughout the season we have been continually supported by senior members in and around the club.

In no uncertain order: President Andy Brunt who for years has been a stalwart of this club, persistently canvassed the junior committee for regular updates and news of successes [and the occasional slip-ups], as well as offering valuable advice where needed (most of the time!). Andy often wandered between junior teams on a Sunday to see for himself the levels of enthusiasm with the different age groups. Mark Greenhalgh: for his role as hon sec and, again, his continuing support and encouragement for the junior section, guesting on occasions to offer his experience with the forwards on a training session, and also especially with the Eccles web site! Chairman Paul Thorpe: another senior club member, as well as a junior coach..... Whose advice and support continues to be invaluable.

Andrea Arnold: my assistant and the reason the junior section is ran as efficiently as it does! Andrea is leaving us for new pastures and it's due to be a huge loss for us. As well as attending the regular Committee meetings on my behalf, she also compiled the minutes for the Junior Section meetings; she was also team manager for the U14s who (as earlier outlined) enjoyed a successful season culminating with their tour of France and Belgium which was arranged by Andrea.

Thank you to Heather for meticulous safeguarding duties, Leeann for planning fixtures superbly and finding matches even at the last minute, Ted and co. for the quality of the pitches and keeping us playing and Marie and team for feeding the crowds on Sundays.

Lastly: to all the volunteer referees, team managers, coaches and parents (especially).

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Girls - Declan O'Regan

Declan was unable to attend the meeting so a written report was read out on his behalf:

U18s

Players Night

Went well, all 17 girls well behaved and for the most part seemed to enjoy it. We were let down by 5 parents who were originally said to be coming, only to this turn out to not be the case on the night. As we were using the Virgin Money system to buy tickets, we had no way to manage this with certainty, but apart from that it all went smoothly. Andy Stimson, Matt, myself all kept an eye on them as best we could

Season overview:

Bit of a mixed bag as we lost key players to injury early on, however from an overall point of view, this meant others have stepped up to the plate, which bodes well for next year.

We went out in the quarter finals of the RFU national cup, losing to Oswestry in the replay.

Finalists at the Littleborough Festival, losing out to Ellesmere Port in the final

Fair Play Winners (always worth mentioning) at the Southport Festival

In total we've had 23 play for the team this year, with a core of 16.

9 players selected for Lancs- our long term 2 injured also would have been selected if they could have recovered.

All 6 who attended Centre of Excellence (new structure based at Waterloo replacing North) were selected. Of the 3 who didn't attend, two are going down south so felt not worth trialing, and one was injured at time of trial.

2 players played at least once for Eccles Womens

1 played for Waterloo 2nds and one game for 1st

In total 5 players are graduating from the U18s to seniors, but we are only gaining 1 from the u15s. This will be supplemented by players returning from seasons spent at other clubs whilst our U15 section was low in numbers (will wait to see if these players follow up on this promise), but there is likely a need to look at recruiting more.

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U15s

No competitive games played all year. Numbers have been low so those attending have merged with the U18s in training. Towards the end of the year we started to get a core of 6 turning up, but unfortunately this attendance for whatever reason hasn't been turned into taking part in a game. All but one of these are U15 again next year, so hopefully this can be pushed on with a bit of work.

2 Players took part in Lancs trials and were selected, both playing in the 3 games for county. Unfortunately one was injured and this curtailed her season with us.

Again there is a need to promote to increase numbers

U13s

Same situation as the U15s but with less players again! Currently have 3 attending, albeit sporadic.

Coaching Structure

As far as we can project, the team of myself, Andy, Matt and Dan Aspinall is good to go again next season. Charlotte and Eleanor were with us at the start of the season, but Charlotte took a job in London and Eleanor struggled due to a continuing back injury. Neither will be with us next year.

Duke of Edinburgh - Mark Baines

As always I would like to Firstly say thank you to the extremely dedicated volunteers, without them it would not be possible to run the award at the club.

We have now given out over 200 awards, 36 of which have been gold. Nine of those gold awards recently made the trip down to the Palace for their presentation, which was another fantastic occasion.

This year we have become our own Licensing Centre, which will reduce our costs over the next three years. This is in recognition of the great strides we've made since launching and our ongoing ability to deliver the programme.

We currently have a 92% completion rate which is way above the national average

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Chairman's Comments - Paul Thorpe

On the senior rugby side it has been a difficult year for the club, with both men's and women's teams struggling, and that having a knock on effect on other areas such as bar take. But we must remember that all clubs have ups and downs to persevere. The important thing for us now is to recognise that things have 'gone wrong' and put plans in place to address that, which have started with the appointment of a new Head Coach. This is not a decision that was taken lightly or rushed into. It follows a process of consultation both inside and outside of the club on what might help, and we're confident this will have a positive impact next season.

Elsewhere, the club continues to do well, with a thriving mini and junior section, and the continued success of the DoE. The recent Colts Finals Day was a great example of the club coming together to achieve something, and the results, both financially and reputational, were excellent. We should be proud of that, and look forward to next year.

INTERVAL

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Election of Officers

The outgoing committee made a recommendation that the structure of the committee should change, to remove any suggestion that it had become “bloated” or inefficient. To this end, only the Club Officers and Captains should be elected at the meeting, and other members should be co-opted on based on the needs as identified later. The recommendation was made by Mark Greenhalgh, seconded by Paul Thorpe and approved unanimously.

Position	Nomination	Proposer	Seconder
President	John Brunt	Mike Bateman	Carolyn Radcliff
	Paul Thorpe	Ted Nicholls	Nick Spooner
Chairman	Mark Greenhalgh	Chris Gaffey	Paul Fleming
Secretary	Mark Baines	Paul Thorpe	Mark Greenhalgh
Treasurer	Mike Bateman	Greg Wilson	Andy Brunt
Senior Fixture Sec.	Don Edmondson	Andy Brunt	Ted Nicholls
1 st XV Captain	Mark Greenhalgh	Glen Cahill	Nick Spooner
2 nd XV Captain	Stuart Cork	Chris Gaffey	Sean Baines
Ladies 1 st XV Captain	Katie Houghton	Siobhan Mullen	Nina Martyn
Ladies 1 st XV Vice	Rowanne Smalley	Katie Houghton	Shelley Maddocks

As the position of President was being contested a vote was required. John Brunt was unable to attend the meeting so Mike Bateman read out a statement on his behalf. Paul Thorpe then made a statement. The vote went in favour of Paul Thorpe, who was duly elected President.

Junior Section Chairman:

Paul Fleming
07889 601558
paul.fleming2@baesystems.com

Safeguarding Officer:

Heather Thorpe
0161 7902622
heather.thorpe@btinternet.com

Women's Section Secretary:

Katie Houghton
07725 608717
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Eccles Rugby Football Club

Founded 1897

President: P. Thorpe

Ground and Clubhouse: Gorton Street, Peel Green, Eccles, Manchester, M30 7LY

Telephone: 0161 789 2613

Website: www.ecclesrfc.org.uk

A.O.B.

Gate charges for men's 1XV home games – The question was asked whether we would continue to charge admission for men's home games now that they were playing at Level 8. The answer was that this had not been decided yet, and would be discussed between both rugby and finance committees in the near future.

Annual subs – The question was asked whether annual subs should be raised to help the club's financial position. The answer was that increases to annual subs actually make very little difference to the overall financial position; the effective collection from all members was more important. But this would be reviewed by the finance committee and the membership advised as required.

Closing Comments from outgoing President – Andy Brunt

Andy thanked Marie Wilson for her continued incredible service to the club, and presented her with a bunch of flowers.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was closed at 22:27.

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