Minutes of the 94th AGM of Ardrossan Academicals RFC held on Monday 29th April 2019 at 7.30 pm

Apologies: - B. Manson, O. Phillips, G. Haggerty, W. Nolan, C. Mair, D. McKee, D. Mackie

The minutes of last years AGM were approved. Proposed – M. O’Hanlon, seconded – J. Anderson

Presidents’ Report

Two years ago when, unexpectedly and unfortunately Bill Nolan had to stand down as Club President for health reasons I was advised by those in the know that , our Vice President, Tony Bale, having sadly passed away protocol dictated that the immediate past President had to step back in. it was fortunate for both me personally and the Club that Brian Campbell agreed to share the post and we had Andy Duncan supporting as Vice President ( he was later to step down due to a conflict of interest).

The club for various reasons felt as if it was at a nadir and it looked like a poison chalice, but what a difference now. I must first =refer to the late Tony Bale’s legacy as it was, he through his generosity and foresight, even in his final days laid the seeds for a turnaround in the Club’s fortunes. The bar has been totally refurbished and the patio constructed. Tony saw that if the members worked together with a positive goal then things would turn around. He was right. We are not there yet but we are on the journey.

On the playing front, which is where my heart is, the men’s’ First XV were a very creditable third in National 3, winning 10 games on the trot. With players returning for next season I hope that we can make the next step up. The Second XV continue to progress and this season more players came through to the senior squad which is a credit to their dedication. A coach/manager is now sought to cement and enhance their focus. Many clubs now cannot produce a second XV so we must be pleased and proud to have these guys.

Who would have thought that we would by now have a strong ladies and girls’ section? Both are contributing greatly to the Club and its culture I feel that largely due to them we are much more broadly based and the better for it. Brian Reid has done a good job coaching the Ladies and if on occasion they have lacked numbers they have addressed that with a recruitment drive. One has only to watch their increased skill and fitness levels to see the real progress. Andy Duncan continues to bring on the next generation of lady players whose season is continuing. They are also a great credit to the social side of the Club and are fund raisers of excellence.

Our youth, mini and micro sections continue to grow and improve in stature. Next season our youth section will play as a Tier Three club, a particular aim of mine and a step towards achieving the Gold Standard set by the SRU. The drive and enthusiasm of all coached helpers and parents is tremendous and permeates the Club particularly on Sundays when we often have a full house. The reward is seeing so many youngsters enjoying playing.

The social side has been turned on its head, the Club is now the place to come. The Burns Supper has been re-established. Memorial Field is where to be at New Year. Functions take place nearly every weekend people want to come and enjoy themselves at our Club- a real complement to those involved. Particularly Brian Campbell and his wife, David Mackie, his wife and sister in law and all the Bar Staff. They have been unstinting in their efforts to ensure that events at the Club are successful. With future events such as the Beer and music festival and other plans taking shape I am very hopeful that this necessary aspect of the Club is in good hands going forward.

When we took over the Club was hitting its overdraft ceiling often and like all clubs we were just scrapping along. At present we have now halved our fixed term load to £10k which is reducing further quickly now. The loan from Tony’s family to meet the cost of the patio has also been paid down and it should not be too long before being paid off. We are still in over draft but it is now peaking at -£14-15k and is carefully controlled we are gradually reducing that peak but like others having to face challenges the latest of which was KA leisure withdrawing the funding for our Development Officer combined with the changing approach of the SRU. This has meant we had to find other funding sources. Sandra Bale has been instrumental in obtaining funding over 3 years from a new Venture Trust, but we have to have matched funding the SRU have promised this but have then added layers of caveats which are leading to a whole new way of approaching delivery of coaching to schools and its funding.

As I have said there will be continuing challenges to meet but we feel that the Club is much better equipped now to meet them and keep going forward. With a younger and enthusiastic management team in Peter and Dougie I know that The Club will be ready to deal with and overcome them, whether on the field and the introduction of the Super Sixes or league restructuring or more financial challenges and there will be some. They are both people who understand the family nature and culture which lie at the heart of what we are.

Lastly, we should like to thank the members of the Board and their tireless efforts on behalf of the Club the often unsung but very necessary heroes. To Brian my eternal thanks for stepping up to the plate and acting as co-president, it is not entirely true to say I was the brains and you the brawn without your drive a lot would not have been achieved. Thank you it has been a real pleasure to have been your co president.

Treasurers report

We had a deficit of £11 157 this year so we continue to need to find ways of cutting expenditure and raising income. Travel expenses increased considerably partly caused by trips to Orkney, Caithness and Aberdeen.

S. bale pointed out that there would be a problem getting grants if we continue to have a large overdraft. Cutting expenditure was essential.

It was important that kit sponsorship made a profit.

**End of Season Review 2018-19 – 1st XV**

Following the end of season 2017-18 players completed a survey and their views were considered to try and improve overall performance. Please see below what we did based on their input.

Preseason

* Changed to mid-June to allow more time off and a shorter more intense preseason
* Some hard-running fitness included into a lot of sessions
* 3 sessions per week
* Games allowed us to get the balance between building preparation, tougher opponent and travel
* Training
* Garnock booked for every Thursday through winter period – huge benefit during this period
* Number of food nights reduced
* Forward coach recruited to work once a week or when available and required
* More feedback delivered to individual players and through chat group (chat group could still go up)

Games

* Arrival time at away matches much better. This can still be a bit tight but more consistent
* Leadership on the field much better

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | Pos | P | W | L | D | F:A | Diff. | TB | LB | Points |
| 2018-19 | 3 | 22 | 16 | 6 | 0 | 631:314 | 317 | 14 | 3 | 81 |
| 2017-18 | 6 | 22 | 11 | 10 | 1 | 532:497 | 35 | 7 | 7 | 56 |
| 2016-17 | 11 | 22 | 4 | 18 | 0 | 454:799 | -345 | 9 | 3 | 28 |
| 2015-16 | 9 | 22 | 8 | 14 | 0 | 521:588 | -67 | 7 | 6 | 45 |
| 2014-15 | 8 | 22 | 5 | 16 | 1 | 520:769 | -249 | 9 | 3 | 34 |
| 2013-14 | 6 | 18 | 9 | 9 | 0 | 410:500 | -90 | 9 | 1 | 46 |

* Team announced on Thursday evenings as part of training

**Statistics**

Players used: 35

New Players: 6

Personal Feedback

Following relegation after the 2016-17 season it was important for the 1stxv to ensure that they continued to develop and aim for promotion back into National League Division 2. Having consolidated and finished mid table last year the aim at the start of the year was off course promotion but with the more realistic aim of a podium finish (3rd Place minimum) which we achieved. Two key factors being that the team have now had the time to consolidate and develop their skills, tactical understanding and physical fitness. And the team are maturing together, and a clear bond is now being shown with a well-established group of core players. When the team performs to their best and play to the structures practiced, they are a very hard team to beat. Both the attack and defence have improved this year and if a couple of results had gone the way they had at home we would perhaps be looking at National 2 this year. It is important that the team grows from this and has a clear aim of promotion next year – which will be tough.

There were less players introduced to the team this year and were all graduates from an U18 programme. Only Finlay Cairns being the regular in the team with Craig Allan and Neil Monaghan pushing towards the end of the season. Cieran Couper was an overseas addition and was a huge attribute but we sadly lost him in December. Sadly, both our Arran in ports only played the cup game at the start of the season due to injury and the lure of football! Logan Maxwell became a more consistent member of the 1st xv and it was great to get Nathan Welsh back after a two year absence due to injury. Sadly, the 2ndxv still struggle to train and this remains a disappointment. However, the boys who do train, do receive their rewards and have found themselves in the 1stxv squad on occasion this year (Craig McLaughlin, Graeme Connell, Harry McDonald at the start of the year, Connor Small on occasion). We also called on the services of Allan Wilson, Tony Finnigan, Stephen Leitch and Stewart Kelt to help with cover during injuries or weddings! For the team to grow the U18s are an important asset however not having an established team this year will mean this will be a difficult process. It also looks likely that Gordon Telfer will move to pasture new (Cartha) and Kyle McNulty still unsure of where he will be studying next year.

Having Ross McCallum at training has certainly helped and although he has not been able to do as much unit work as we would like the time, he has spent with the forwards has been great. I was surprised to see that a 2ndxv coach has been advertised as I am unsure of who they will coach.

Scott has produced video coverage each week and the players have found this very beneficial completing their own match reviews.

Great to have the doctor pitch side on a Saturday be we are still missing pitch side support and physio when he is not there. Players continue to use optimal and will receive a discount, but dedicated Monday clinic is no longer an option.

More support on match day is required to ensure the pitch is set up and I feel that there is still much the players can do to get into the club quicker and spend a little longer socialising with the opposition.

 R Couper - Head Coach

Bar report 2019

I HAVE NOT SEEN ACTUAL RECORDED ACCOUNTS FIGURES BUT FROM MY RECORDS TURNOVER SIMILAR ON LAST YEAR AND SIMILAR AS FROM PREVIOUS YEARS.

THIS IS GOOD NEWA THAT WE ARE NOT LOSING TO MUCH TURNOVER AND SHOW THE EFFORTS PUT IN BY MEMBERS IN ORDER TO HELP THE CLUB.

THIS IS SOME THING THAT MUST BE BUILT ON ESPECIALLY BY THE YOUNGER PLAYING AND RECENTLY RETIRED IN ORDER TO CONTINUE THE VIABLITY OF THE RUGBY CLUB.

I HAVE BEEN BAR CONVENER FOR THE PAST 15 YEARS AND THE TURNOVER HAS NOT DRAMATICLLAY DECREASED DURING THIS TIME WHICH IS TESTIMENT TO HARD WORK PUT IN BY MEMBERS BUT MUST BE MAINTAINED BY FUNCTIONS GOING FORWARD.

THANKS TO ALL STAFF FOR THEIR EFFORTS AS ALWAYS ALSO TO OUR CLEANER HELYN FOR HER EFFORTS IN KEEPING ALL AREAS IN A VERY PRESENTABLE CONDITION.

WE HAD LICENCE INSPECTION LAST WEEK, COPIE SOF MY REPORT ARE AVAILABLE, SOME CHALLENGES AHEAD TO MAINTAIN OUR CONDITIONS.

IAIN ROBERTSON

# Youth Conveners Report

## Minis & Micros

Our mini and micro sections have had a good year with lots of games played and several appearances in pre-match Glasgow Warriors’ tournaments at Scotstoun. This is probably our strongest year in terms of player numbers with about 90 players registered and more turning up every week. Our micros, P4s & P7s have boomed this year and this is now the largest M&M section the club has had in at least the last 6 or 7 years.

There are 12 coaches distributed throughout the teams with a strong core of at least 20 volunteers that help with all the other aspects of running the teams. While the coach numbers are growing, this growth is not keeping up with the rate of expansion of the teams and we will need to drive hard to recruit coaches over the summer to continue growing at our current rate. With the current mini convener moving up to youth rugby next year there has been a good uptake of volunteers to take over parts of their role however we’re still looking for a point of contact to be the Mini Convener and this will be nailed down over the summer.

## Youth

The U16s have had a mixed bag of a season with a spate of injuries impacting playing numbers, however, they’ve recruited off the back of this and are now in a strong position with a squad of 18 players (6 of which come from Arran) and two coaches. They have reached the final of the West plate and were the exhibition game before the Arran 7s where both sets of players impressed. This group should transition well to U18s and have already played against Annan U17s and held their own against older, larger opponents with the game finishing in a draw.

The U15s were not as plagued by injuries as the older team and managed to get more consistent playing numbers throughout the first half of the season and they have also managed to recruit a number of players to finish the season with a squad of 16, 2 coaches and a team manager. They have continued playing 7s and took part in the Melrose next generation 7s as a part of their tour to Melrose.

Our U14s have struggled for numbers this year and have started to bleed numbers due to lack of games. At the start of the season they were getting plenty of game time and the numbers, while low, were stable however after the poor weather came in and games started to get cancelled the numbers dropped. This then meant that when the weather improved there were insufficient numbers to fulfil fixtures which exacerbated the issues the squad are having. They have finished the season with 9 players, two coaches and a team manager and lots of work will need to be done at this age group in order to fulfil 15 a-side fixtures at U15s.

The U13s have never managed to get settled with lots of different coaches taking them over the year and this has negatively impacted player retention. We have struggled to build links with schools to get player transfer, with Largs which has 30 S1s playing rugby. This is partly down to the unstable nature of the U13s and partly down to the fact that they’re getting to train every week and a game every fortnight at Largs Academy. The team has finished the season with 8 players and no permanent coaches (they’re training with the U14s).

We are on the cusp of entering the T3 leagues however if numbers continue to drop at U13s and U14s and we can’t fulfil fixtures then it is unlikely that we will stay there. This is very disappointing as the long-term goal of the youth section has been to achieve T3 status in order to get more local games. It is clear to see that the teams which are growing have a stable coaching structure and plenty of game time. In order to establish a stable coaching structure next year, we will need to recruit at least 3 or 4 more coaches for U14s and U15s next year to solidify these teams and ensure we maintain T3 status.

## Girls

This year the girls U15s team has started and they are continuing to grow in numbers as there is a strong link with the girls’ team at Largs Academy. At the minute there is only weekend training/games to ensure that there isn’t too much rugby thrown at them all at once, particularly with the amount of school rugby on offer, to allow the team to continue to grow. The team have 12 or so consistent trainers, with more for games, and 3 coaches. The team also have Andy to call on for support however now that he has got the team up and running with a good number of coaches, he’s hoping to take a step back and get more involved in the coach development side of his role. Next year the aim is to build on success of this year and to organise more regular fixtures, while remaining outside a league structure.

## Success Stories

We’ve had several major successes off the pitch this season that need to be highlighted, the first of which took place right at the start of the season. We hosted a Mini and Micro tournament with 5 visiting clubs having teams competing at all M&M age groups. The tournament took place across 6 pitches with over 200 players turning up and almost twice as many parents meaning that the club was absolutely packed, and it was a great fundraiser for the M&Ms to get shorts, socks and coaching kit.

Another great fundraiser was the Youth Funky Fundraiser which went down a storm with the event selling out both the hall and the bar. The funds raised here will go towards prizes for the end of season prizegiving.

The Ardrossan Schools Select U16s reached the semi-final of the Scottish Schools Shield before Christmas where they lost to Oban schools on a soaking wet day. This team was made up of players from both our U15s and U16s along with a couple of players that aren’t at the club yet. While not something the club was directly involved with, we should still be very proud of the team making it so far in a national competition.

The U15s raised money and planned a great tour to Melrose where they took part in the next generation 7s, went along to the main Melrose 7s on the Saturday and had some great teambuilding throughout the weekend with the boys all thoroughly enjoying themselves.

On top of these events several our young players have been selected for representative rugby throughout the year:

* James Reid and Joe McHugh from the U16s were both members of the Glasgow U16s squad at the start of the year and have been invited to take part in the Glasgow Thistles tour to Perpignan.
* Andrew Buchanan from the U15s is currently going through the pathway process and has made it into the Glasgow South squad and will be trying to make his way into the Glasgow squad over the coming months.
* From the girls U15s Rachel Caputa is in the Scotland Futures squad and Emily Sweeny is in the Glasgow South training squad.

## Senior Links

A big objective of mine this season was to improve the link with the senior section of the club by having our youth section come down to support the seniors on a Saturday and then for the seniors to come down on a Sunday and help coach. This was largely unsuccessful, in part due to time constraints of the youth playing other sports on Saturdays however momentum is beginning to gather with the older boys and girls coming down to watch games. On the flip side the senior involvement has been mediocre even after they were given a rota however it is something to build on for next season.

## Other Mentions

Next month the club will be hosting its inaugural rugby weekender festival with youth rugby taking a starring role as the headline event on the Saturday and the Sunday being youth rugby tournaments. The first is the U18s 7s and then on Sunday we’ll be hosting a youth 10s tournament. There we should have about 300 players across both days with the 10s tournament involving U13s-U16s and Girls across three pitches which will allow us to show off the rugby we have on offer at Ardrossan.

Lastly, I must give a massive thank you to all the coaches, volunteers, parents, sponsors and players involved with the youth section, without whom, we wouldn’t have had such a successful season both on and off the pitch.

Communication and Marketing Report

Since the last AGM the C&M has been busy working with most sections of the club.

In support of the DO we helped with organising the charity day and promoted various events organised by Andy, such as sports camps and Tartan Touch.

We have also promoted several youth and Ladies games.

A new sponsor was identified, Karl McCrea, who has sponsored this seasons u15s.

Several member benefits were arranged and promoted, such as 10% discount at Steps Podiatry and discounts at Rugbystore.co.uk Gordon Christie also set up a smile account with Amazon which has also been promoted,

Working with Ian and Brian we have promoted all 1st XV home games and match ball sponsor and latterly we have been testing out publishing the Presidents Match day Message on FB on a Friday.

Several grants were applied for with the most recent, Aviva, generating £500 for our media group. This has already provided a new computer for the DO and will fund a scaffold tower for our club photographer. It is hoped that we can also attach a scoreboard to the tower.

Currently we are monitoring deadline for several funders such as Calmac, bids are open from June.

Meeting have been held with some funders the latest being Landtrust who are keen to support us.

A new webmaster was appointed, Kerr Glen, who has resolved several issues and is keen to develop the site in a positive way.

A mini tour was organised for the u15s. The team was invited to take part in the Melrose Next Generation 7’s, the first team to visit being last season’s 15s led by Scott Campbell and Andy Duncan.

The lads played on the Friday, watched the Melrose 7’s on the Saturday and went swimming on the Sunday.

All costs were met by fundraising by the team and a donation from the M&Ms.

We are working with Alan Merry and his team to ensure that the Beer and Music Festival is a success.

Going forward it has been identified that there is still a lack of communication between the sections of the club. We need to address this to prevent duplication of effort and to bring us all closer.

**Fixture and Referee Secretary Report 2018/19**

As it did last year, this season has gone smoothly. As is normally the case with the weather, there has been the odd postponement of 1st and 2nd XV games. However, this trend has been consistent with other clubs in their respective leagues.

In general, the fixture secretaries of the other clubs within National League 3 and Reserve League West 2 have been a pleasure to deal with, and the information provided by whostheref about referees and ref coaches has been tremendous. The referees and ref coaches have been a pleasure to deal with and very understanding with regards cancellations. Thanks to Rory, Ian Hunter and David Frazer for their assistance with the 1st XV throughout the season.

Tony Finnigan and Graeme Connell have been a tremendous help regarding the 2nd XV. We have had very few occasions where we have been unable to fulfil fixtures due to lack of numbers, which, overall is down to the hard work of Tony and Graeme. Many thanks to Tony and Graeme for their help.

Unfortunately, on a couple of occasions early in the season there was no ref appointed to the 2XV games. For our home games, I was informed that if there is no ref appointed it is up to the home club to provide a referee. Other than a couple of guys, Andrew Duncan, Stephen Leitch and Murray Galloway, we do not have anyone else qualified. Murray now has appointments to ref every week which is great but to use one of the others would be of a detriment to our playing squads. WRRS have offered to undertake a referee course at the club should anyone be willing to volunteer. If so, please inform me.

Unfortunately, there were no Under 18’s fixtures this year, but I believe we will have an under 18 team next year which is great.

The ladies’ section has run smoothly throughout the season, although they have not had a huge number of games. For those games they have had, referees have been identified early on, which is great and makes my job a whole lot easier. Unfortunately, there have been occasions where Ardrossan Ladies or the opposing team have struggled to fulfil the fixture due to lack of players, but big thanks to Brian Reid and Lisa Ledingham-Park for their efforts in communicating with both myself and the opposition. Hopefully, playing numbers will increase next season.

As I will have a different, slightly busier role next season, Matt Hood has agreed to take the role of fixture secretary next season, should his application be approved tonight! Thanks to Matt, in advance, for agreeing to undertake this task.

Membership convenor report

Full members - 41 with 10 lapsed.

House - 32 with 1 lapsed

Associate - 63 with 8 lapsed

Life - 12

Hockey girls - 29

CAMRA - 2

Male players - 45 with 11 lapsed

Youth - 1

Female players - 26 with 4 lapsed

Total - 252 members with 34 lapsed

This list does not include minis/micros and family membership as a result of having junior players.

Some "full members" were transferred to House as their subs fell below the £84. I will speak to some of them to see if they wish to upgrade. Similarly, with some House Members who now pay lower than the £60. Lapsed members have in the main been contacted during the year, but no money or reply forthcoming. Will contact them again later this year.

Allan Merry

Accies Ladies' Section report

Accies Ladies have finished a bridging season which moves the ladies’ game in Scotland to summer rugby. We expect to start our competitive season in the new West League in August, competing against teams including Hamilton, Wigtownshire and West of Scotland.

In 2019 we were pleased to be able to fulfil all our fixtures in the Cup (apart from one snowed-off game). This is a marked improvement on last year’s competition and while our inexperience shows on the field, we’re learning more with every fixture fulfilled.

Thanks to a recruitment drive led by member Annie Hallam, the ladies’ section has increased memberships again and is seeing a healthy turn out at Tuesday evening/Sunday morning training. We celebrate the successes of players who have been selected at international level, and we’ve been involved in local community initiatives to promote women’s sport. We’re exploring a partnership with Ayr and Stewartry with the aim of increasing female participation in rugby across Ayrshire. This link-up is driven by head coach Brian Reid and DO Andy Duncan and, while its early days, there’s potential to increase opportunities for players at all levels.

Overall, it's been a year of transition; we're looking forward to the new league structure bringing some stability and building on that.

Election of Office Bearers

President – Peter Gossman

Peter thanked Ian and Brian for all the work they have done over the last 2 years. He is honoured to be president. Many family members have been involved in the club and his son is now playing.

He hoped to continue the good work at the club and thanked all who helped in the past and who will do so in the future.

Vice president – Douglas Tyler

The following were elected nem. con.

Bar convener – I. Robertson

Secretary – G. Christie

House Convener – M. McFarlane

Youth convener – S. Campbell

C & M convener – A. Cairns

Board members – A. Merry, P. Carson

C.P. O. – J. Cairns

AOCB

Ali Cairns will publicise youth fees and what you get for them.

There is the need for an answering machine and more use of digital banking.

We need to get more people involved in club activities. e.g. quizzes and more activities on match days.

Board minutes should be put on the website.

The meeting ended at 9.19 pm