

England Fire Service Rugby Union  
**Annual General Meeting**  
Season 2005-06

OA's RFC Hertfordshire  
05 April 2006 (11.15hrs)

**Minutes**

Stuart Irwin, Director of Rugby for England Fire Service RFU welcomed all to the meeting and once again thanked Old Albanian's RFC for their hospitality and the use of the facilities.

**2. Members Present:**

Stuart Irwin	(SI)	Buckinghamshire & England
Symon Wildgoose	(SW)	Kent
Mike Shears	(MS)	Humberside & FSSAA British Section
Aaron Waltho	(AW)	Avon & England
Dominic Harrison	(DH)	Cumbria
Bob Curry	(BC)	Derbyshire
Alan Hoar	(AH)	Oxfordshire & England
Hugh Oram	(HO)	Hertfordshire
Mark Burgess	(MBg)	Hertfordshire & England
Paul New	(PN)	Bedfordshire
Marl Boek	(MBk)	Cornwall
Tony Behan	(TB)	West Midlands
Colin Hatch	(CH)	Cornwall
Jon Navin	(JN)	Cornwall & England
Louis Stevens	(LS)	Cornwall

**3. Apologies:**

Peter Holland	(PH)	Lancashire & England
Paul Cartwright	(PC)	Warwickshire & England
Adey Mitchell	(AM)	Northamptonshire & England
Chris Bigland	(CB)	Royal Berkshire

**4. Minutes of 2005 AGM and Matters Arising:**

The minutes of the 2005 AGM were proposed as being a true record of events by CH and seconded MBk. The only matter arising was to confirm Gary Garbett (West Mids) as the Section's official photographer (item 11. Management Team vacancy).

**5. Chairperson's Address:**

SI informed the meeting that the Chairman had been involved in an RTC whilst travelling to the meeting and would consequently be unable to attend. SI was able to confirm that PH was uninjured. SI advised the meeting of

Peter's intention to stand-down from his role as chairman for next season, a position that he has held for 15 years. SI formally recorded his personal thanks and the section's appreciation of the support and contribution that PH has made during his tenure. SI urged that PH be encouraged to remain involved with the Section and suggested that he be offered the newly created position of Honorary President of England Fire Services RFC (see item 10).

## **6. Director of Rugby's Report:**

SI highlighted the team's performances for the season, with victories and significant performances against Scottish Police and a combined Irish Fire Services side. For yet another year SI was disappointed to report the team's defeat to Welsh Fire Services.

SI reminded the meeting of the forthcoming (06 May) 'benefit' game to be played in memoriam to Andy Steele, former Avon firefighter. AW asked representatives to encourage attendance at this game, which is receiving 'international status' and will generate funds for a number of charities.

SI confirmed the new kit sponsorship arrangement with Samurai and thanked Cameron Waghorn for his assistance in establishing the partnership.

SI confirmed that he was seeking more challenging fixtures for the forthcoming season and had provisionally added the Gardai, RAF, French Fire Services and Royal Navy Scotland to the fixture options.

MS reminded the meeting of the need to consult the FSSAA European Committee before arranging international fixtures beyond the 'home' nations.

SI updated the meeting on the proposal to provide a permanent venue for England Fire Service RFC matches. It had been hoped to secure the RFU's Castlecroft ground (West Mids.) for all future home fixtures, a proposal that initially had the support of the RFU and the venue's management.

Unfortunately the RFU have decided to sell the site for redevelopment. SI and TB are now seeking to secure an alternative, midlands based, venue as the Sections home ground.

## **7. Hon. National Secretary's Report:**

PC was unable to attend the meeting and no formal report was submitted. PC had indicated, to SI, a preparedness to continue in the role if required.

## **8. Treasurers Report:**

TB provided the meeting with copies of draft accounts for the season 2005-06 and confirmed that they are currently being audited. TB explained that his inability to provide, auditor signed, final accounts at the AGM is entirely due to the non-alignment of FSSAA accounting procedures with the playing season.

MS confirmed that this issue is consistent with other 'winter' sports sections and an amendment to current procedures is currently being considered by the National FSSAA Treasurer and Board. TB highlighted that the Section's poor financial situation at the end of season 2004-05. This had resulted in £367 debit on the account that was only resolved by fortuitous sponsorship. TB stated that this was an unacceptable situation and that strenuous efforts by the Section's management team had resulted in a healthy financial position at

the end of this season and a closing balance of £3,635. TB was cautiously optimistic in respect of the Section's future financial standing and advised the meeting that he and CB were currently negotiating further sponsorship to secure that position.

Details of the draft final accounts are attached to these minutes as Appendix 'A'

## **9. National Cup Report:**

MBk advised the meeting that 11 teams had entered for this season's competition, resulting in two pools (north and south). Teams that had withdrawn for this season included Gloucestershire, Cleveland and Hertfordshire but new entrants, Devon and Cumbria, had made it through to the final. MBk was optimistic for the future of the competition and had already received indications of interest from Derbyshire and Surrey who are keen to enter next season. MBk will be contacting Brigades throughout the summer to secure commitment for next year's competition with a provisional closing date for entries of 31 August 06. It was suggested that Taunton may be a venue for the finals. AW also indicated that Avon would be prepared to host the finals and provide a 'South West' venue. There was considerable debate in respect of potential alterations to the fixture structure and it was agreed that the two key issues to be addressed are the provision of sufficient meaningful matches for each team and the need to reduce prohibitive travelling. It was resolved that the current pool structure would remain for next year's competition and that Brigade representatives would be urged to play at neutral venues, where appropriate, to reduce the travelling burden on 'away' teams.

SI highlighted the issue of teams utilising non-Service players to ensure fixtures are met. It was confirmed that only players that meet the FSSAA membership criteria are eligible to play in the competition and a system for validating the membership status of players (similar to the national football section's arrangements) will be investigated. It was acknowledged, however, that subject to the agreement of both captains, fixtures utilising non-FSSAA players may go ahead on the forfeiture of the competition points. This would remove the 'penalty' for teams not fulfilling a fixture and ensure that matches went ahead, albeit under a different status.

SI reminded representatives of the need to ensure RFU insurance for all FSSAA fixtures.

## **10. Election of Officials:**

The following positions were appointed for the season 2006-07 and elected unanimously:

Hon. President	Peter Holland	Lancashire
Chairperson	Damian Smith	Buckinghamshire
Vice Chairperson	Dominic Harrison	Cumbria
Director of Rugby	Stuart Irwin	Buckinghamshire
Treasurer	Tony Behan	West Midlands
Hon. National Secretary	Alan Hoar	Oxfordshire
National Cup Secretary	Mark Boek	Cornwall

## **11. National Cup – The Future:**

This matter was covered in the National Cup Secretary's report (see item 9 above)

## **12. Sponsorship managers Report:**

In CB's absence the report was given by TB and SI who indicated that the Section has benefited from two major sponsors for this season. This ongoing sponsorship should secure the basic financial needs of the Section but there are two areas that remain to be addressed; player accommodation costs and the match day expenses of the host Brigade.

It was agreed that it is unacceptable for players to be expected to sleep on "fire station floors" and that reasonable accommodation should be provided for International fixtures. The meeting agreed that this should be part funded by the section (through sponsorship) and a balancing contribution by the individual player. It was further felt that the player contribution should be met by the individual's Brigade or local FSSAA committee wherever possible. It was recognised that this would be subject to local 'negotiation' and determination by the individual player's Brigade but with the support of this Section.

A number of suggestions were made in respect of supporting 'host' Brigades but it was agreed that funding for match day expenses was a burden accepted by the host Brigade. The Section will support any initiative to sell player 'shirt' sponsorship for such matches.

## **13. PR/Website Managers Report:**

CH advised the meeting that the section's website is online and may be viewed at the following location:

<http://www.englandfireservicerugby.co.uk/>

The site is subject to continuous development and includes photos, match reports, sponsors links etc. CH requested that, to maintain the currency of the site, all Section officials and Brigade representatives regularly provide up-to-date information, particularly any changes to existing content. There is a need to maintain the integrity, standards and reputation of the Section, as reflected through this site, and CH will control and monitor its content.

## **14. AOB:**

PN raised the issue of player commitment for international matches and the need for individuals to adhere to the preparation and training timetable. It was agreed that the timetable could be amended to meet the requirements of locally determined kick off times. JN asked that when selecting dates for international fixtures, due cognisance is given to the RFU fixture list. This is particularly important to ensure the availability of national league players, which now accounts for most of the squad.

SI asked that any Brigade able to accommodate, maintain and audit the playing kit and associated equipment should contact him or AH to discuss arrangements.

PN advised the meeting that the Section had contributed a set of England shirts to an international rugby charity, providing kit for developing rugby nations.

The meeting concluded at 12.20