

BATH RUGBY SUPPORTERS' CLUB

AGM 2021

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



- 1. Introduction.** As you will have already seen from the reports from the Treasurer and the Membership Secretary, BRSC has come through an exceptionally difficult year with our finances in excellent shape and with a highly creditable membership total, both of which combine to provide an excellent basis from which to develop BRSC as we go forward into our 25th Anniversary year. It also means that I am able to start my report with some good news and confirm that we are proposing to peg the Membership subscriptions at their current level for another year.
- 2.** Achieving this has not been easy and I would like to express my sincere thanks to all the Committee Members who worked extraordinarily hard in circumstances that none of us had encountered before, to ensure that BRSC is ready to resume its full activities as soon as the Government Roadmap out of Covid restrictions allows us to do so. As you know, several Members of the Committee were due to stand down at AGM 2020 but volunteered to stay on for the next year to help BRSC meet the challenges that were sure to be presented. This was invaluable. I also want to thank Tarquin McDonald and all the staff at Bath Rugby, not only for ensuring that we have a team to cheer on at the Rec in 21/22 but also for their willing support over the last year. They have kept us in touch and helped us with a lot of the things that we set out to achieve.
- 3. BRSC Business Review Year 20/21.** At AGM 2020 I was able to reflect on a robust financial position, a healthy membership profile and a fully complemented Committee. With the inevitable Covid restrictions in mind, we started 20/21 by conducting an analysis of BRSC's strengths and weaknesses, the potential threats to BRSC's ability to deliver our normal business and any opportunities to adapt and possibly improve areas of our activity. We concluded that given the solid financial and membership figures at the start of the year, BRSC was in good shape and that any threats would be external, with us having little or no ability to influence them. We therefore decided to focus on capitalising on our strengths and positively seeking to identify and grasp opportunities.

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4. **Committee Activity.** We went about this in a variety of ways. It was essential that as a Committee we were all able to meet and take decisions, so we shifted our meetings onto “zoom” and have met formally every month during 20/21 with many ad hoc “virtual” meetings in smaller groups. This has proven to be highly effective and whilst we all agree that face to face meetings have an important part to play, it may be that going forward we continue to exploit “virtual” options for at least some of our meetings. This has the added bonus of enabling Members who live remotely from Bath who might wish to offer their services as Committee Members but who have hitherto been reluctant to volunteer because of distance constraints to get involved and play a full part in managing BRSC.

5. **Engagement with BRSC Members.** One of the areas of weakness that we discussed derived from our inability to deliver any “live” events this year and lack of face to face engagement with BRSC Members. We all enjoy the chats at the Gazebo on match days, but of course that has been denied to us since 1st March 2020! We decided that the best approach was to “up our game” on the communications front. We managed a couple of on-line events, notably our evening with Francois Louw with guest appearances from Neal Hatley and Lee Mears and a successful just- for – fun Christmas quiz.

6. Early in the year we took the decision to suspend our normal programme of twice-yearly Newsletters supplemented by Newsflashes and to focus solely on producing Newsflashes, as close as possible to monthly, containing news and where possible articles which we negotiated ourselves and which were published only in the BRSC Newsflashes. The recent articles by Francois Louw and Miles Reid are cases in point – we regard these as real “benefits of membership”. I might add that both were very happy to do it, underlining the value which players current and past place on the supporters.

7. We continued with our normal Try of the Month competitions, managing to deliver the certificates to the winners under Covid secure protocols. We also presented Trophy Stones to last season’s leavers including Matt Garvey, Francois Louw and Chris Cook. We presented a memento to Rhys Priestland to mark his record of 36 consecutive successful kicks at goal in the Premiership.

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8. We have also overhauled the BRSC Website (allez-bath.co.uk) and have been active across the usual social media platforms.

9. **Engagement with Bath Rugby.** As you would expect, we have been in very close contact with the Bath Rugby management team at all levels during the last year. Bath Rugby have had two or three representatives at each of our Committee meetings during 20/21, always selecting the right person to address our pre-notified topics. This has had several benefits. Through these highly valuable working relationships we have been able to resolve individual issues presented to us by Members. We have also been able to provide a supporters' perspective to Bath Rugby's strategic planning and decision making on major issues such as the Club Membership schemes, Ticket balloting, safe return to the Rec protocols and the 21/22 Season Ticket campaign. This part of our business activity which provides a direct information conduit from BRSC Members to the highest levels of Bath Rugby management is a responsibility which we take very seriously. Our input is always welcomed and valued. Myself and BRSC Secretary Ian Rooney have also had very productive virtual meetings with Tarquin McDonald during the year.

10. **Engagement with others.** We were delighted to be able to support the Bath Rugby Foundation's "Sponsor our Students" campaign. Engagement with local businesses to enhance our Members' discounts list has been problematic for obvious reasons, but we have endeavoured to maintain contact with other supporter organisations, writing to the supporters of each visiting team before every home game. We even held a "zoom" meeting with our opposite numbers at London Irish Supporters' Club to compare notes on how we were coping during Covid.

11. **Process Review.** One of the opportunities that we took during the last year was the chance to refine our management processes and to do some innovative thinking for the future. Key processes that we focused on were:

- a. **Committee Meetings.** We fully embraced "virtual" meetings as a way of doing business. This has proven to have many advantages and we will consider how best we can exploit this in the future.

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- b. Newsletters and Newsflashes.** In addition to the decision to suspend the Newsletters and move to more frequent, up to date Newsflashes, we confirmed the decision to shift to in – house electronic production and despatch by email. This provides considerably more flexibility in production and delivers substantial savings by avoiding the need for external formatting, printing and postage. We still produce a very limited number in hard copy for those unable to receive them electronically.
- c. Membermojo.** We have completed the testing and roll out of membermojo as our membership management tool. We used it for the first time last year which required a certain amount of additional data capture. This year the process will be much simpler and you can look forward to receiving your renewal reminders in late August. We have also synchronised the membermojo database with our mailchimp bulk email tool which has reduced the number of “bounceback” non – delivery messages from recent mailshots to zero.

12. Summary. At the start of 20/21, as a Committee we had a difficult decision to make. Against the background of strict national level Covid - related restrictions on events and the knowledge that there would be very little prospect of supporters being able to attend matches at the Rec we had to decide whether to put BRSC effectively into hibernation for the duration or to adapt to the changed environment and do the best we could to keep BRSC vibrant and our Members engaged. We chose to do the latter and I am certain it was the right decision. It entailed a lot of work – as a Committee we have been busier during this year than at any time in my recollection in the 14 or so years that I have been a Committee Member. BRSC Secretary Ian Rooney kept an activity log over the last year and I have attached it to this report to give you some idea of how we tackled the challenges of 20/21. As you will see, the workload has been constant and to some extent the log merely represents the tip of the iceberg since it lists outputs rather than the effort involved in achieving each one.

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13. The result is that BRSC has come through this very challenging year in remarkably good shape and is well placed to go from strength to strength as we celebrate our 25th Anniversary year and, of course, return to the Rec in September!

14. **And finally....** As you know, after eight years this will be my last AGM as BRSC Chairman. It has been an incredible privilege to hold that post and something that I have always taken a huge amount of pride in. As well as expressing my thanks to all the members of the current Committee, I would also like to thank all the other Committee members that I have had the pleasure of working with over the years. Without their commitment, talent and support BRSC would not be what it is today – arguably the best Supporters' Club in the Premiership. Mostly though, I would like to thank all BRSC Members for all your support both to me personally and to the Committee members who work so hard on your behalf. We really do appreciate it!

ALLEZ BATH!

Kevin Lawrence

Chairman

BRSC