



ENGLISH RUGBY COUNTIES ASSOCIATION

Counties in Membership

Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Cornwall
Devon
Durham
Eastern Counties
Essex
Gloucestershire
Hampshire
Hertfordshire
Lancashire

Middlesex
North Midlands
N.L.D.
Oxfordshire
Somerset
Staffordshire
Surrey
Warwickshire

Associate Members

Derbyshire
Lincolnshire
Nottinghamshire

MINUTES of the meeting held at Fiveways Old Edwardians RFC on Sunday 30th June 2019 at 11:00 a.m.

Counties represented:

Jonathan Dance	Berkshire	Brian East (Secretary)	Middlesex
David McAteer	Berkshire	Peter Baveystock	Middlesex
Alan Mitchell (Treasurer)	Cornwall	Peter Grace (Chairman)	North Midlands
John Drew	Devon	Steve Guy	North Midlands
Treve Mitchell	Devon	Norman Robertson	N.C.A.
Adrian Siddorn	Gloucestershire	Keith Skirving	North Midlands
Peter Topham	Hampshire	Colin Baldwin	I.P. Chairman
Mike Glogg	Hampshire	Rob Forsyth	Staffordshire
John Gregory	Hertfordshire	Michael Proctor	Staffordshire
David Roberts	Hertfordshire	Malcolm Caird	Surrey
David Hodgson	Lancashire	Charlie McGinty	Warwickshire

Apologies were received from:

Gwyn Stone	Buckinghamshire	Rob Bray	North Midlands
Richard Simeons	Cornwall	Charlie Hemmings	North Midlands
Ivor Smith	Essex	Andy Shorney	Somerset
Peter Williams	Gloucestershire	Steve Mead	Somerset
David Herriman	Lancashire		

1. PRELIMINARIES

- 1.1 The meeting stood in memory of Mickey Steel-Bodger, past President of the RFU who had passed away since our last meeting. He also thanked Brian East for his time and efforts at a difficult time for him following the recent sudden death of his wife.
- 1.2 The Chairman, Peter Grace, welcomed all to the meeting and thanked members for attending.

1.3 He welcomed our guest, Bill Sweeney, CEO of the RFU. He commented that our relationship with the RFU over recent years had been positive and that we are listened to.

2 **MINUTES** of meeting held on 20th January 2019

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman. He reported that he had been in correspondence with Jeff Gage and that the North Midland final against Cumbria held at Twickenham had been a good day for all.

3. **The role of ERCA in the future**

The meeting took the form of comments and questions from the floor and answered by Bill Sweeney.

3.1 Colin Baldwin (Immediate Past Chairman) asked why the debate over relationship between the RFU and PRL seems to be held in the press

Bill replied that the press thrive on negative stories. The RFU will hit their budgeted targets this year and will be profitable. It is unlikely that the following year will be profitable given that there are no Autumn home internationals and only 2 home Six Nations games. Our sport is similar to the Olympics and relies very heavily on volunteers. Communication was very important to this group of people in order to dispel mis-reporting.

3.2 Peter Topham (Hampshire) reinforced the communication topic and stressed that it was important to communicate with the CBs and to consult them Clarity was very important so that the grassroots of the game know what is happening.

John Drew (Devon) said that the communications about paying players had been sent out but not assimilated by the clubs

Charlie McGinty (Warks) asked if the bulletins could be sent out on separate topics rather than incorporate them in one send-out

3.3 Rob Forsyth (Staffs) spoke about the impression that the game is growing. The increase in the women's game is distorting the numbers – the men's game is declining

Bill replied that society is changing and that the numbers need to be refined

John Drew commented that the money for the women's game had been ring-fenced in spite of the cuts elsewhere in the community game

Charlie McGinty reported that clubs are now having more input into the PFR planning process

Peter Baveystock (Middlesex) said that netball was flourishing in the ladies section of his club whereas rugby was not.

Brian East (Middlesex) reported that in metropolitan London clubs without clubhouses were flourishing. The majority of clubs operating out of pubs were able to concentrate of getting men's teams out and were running numbers of sides, more than the average in England.

3.4 Peter Topham commented about how to raise funds to support the County sides. It was probably not politic to use the money generated from the junior side of the game. He further commented that Hampshire were having difficulty in providing funding for all levels of the County game. He stressed that funding of these sides was of paramount importance to his CB.

Peter Baveystock stated that running junior sections is a way of providing players for the senior sides. It was important to retain the players for the future of the game.

Alan Mitchells said that money ought to be flowing back into clubs from the Premiership and Championship to clubs that had developed the youngsters that get taken into the Academy system.

- 3.5 Question to Bill re the Premiership from the floor – where are we?
Bill responded by explaining that negotiations are ongoing regarding promotion and relegation. He said that it was best not to make any further comment at this point.
- 3.6 Norman Robertson (N.C.A) requested that Council members are given sufficient time to obtain the views from their CBs on important topics.
- 3.7 Steve Guy (North Midland) asked if it would be possible that CBs might have a wider access to Twickenham. It would be good PR for CB volunteers.

4. **County Championship**

- 4.1 Malcolm Caird reported.

It was still the intention to continue to hold all the finals at Twickenham in the future. It was felt that this year had been a success and the players had benefitted.

5. **Presentation to Jed Stone**

Peter Grace produced a glass trophy to be given to Jed Stone to commemorate his life-membership and asked Peter Topham to present it to Jed.

At this point Peter Topham and Mike Glogg left the meeting

6. **Treasurer's report**

- 6.1 Alan Mitchell reported that there is a balance of £2707 in the bank account. 11 CBs have yet to pay their subscriptions for 2018-2019 season and they were named at the meeting

7. **Any other business**

- 7.1 Charlie McGinty stressed the importance of getting the GMS data updated regarding the number of games played by teams within clubs. This measure will decide the allocation of international tickets in the future.
- 7.2 Peter Grace stressed that ERCA is not a talking shop but importantly a forum for exchanging information. He requested that CBs try to bring fresh representatives to our meetings.

Peter Grace thanked Bill for coming to our meeting and answering our questions and wished him well for the future.

8. **Annual General Meeting**

The following officers were elected

Chairman – Peter Grace

Immediate Past Chairman – Colin Baldwin

Secretary – Brian East but still wanting to retire

Treasurer – Alan Mitchell and also wanting to resign/retire

Steering Group

Midlands – Charlie McGinty

North – David Herriman

West – Treve Mitchell

South – Peter Topham

Meeting dates for next season

15th September 2019

20th January 2020

2nd June 2020 plus AGM

The meeting closed at 12:55

Signed by Peter Grace, Chairman, as a true record of the meeting

_____ Date _____