



A word from our President

Crikey in what seems like a flash the Autumn Internationals have come and gone and despite the bullying defeat by the world Champions South Africa, the outcome was very encouraging....played 4 and won 3!

Now December is here and it's time for sending Christmas Cards!

Anyway in many respects it's been a better year and as ever our ongoing support for grassroots has been very well received. And like so many of you I thought our Autumn Dinner was a really first class evening. Geech was superb and it was a joy to see and socialise at last with so many members and guests long into the evening and beyond!

In a couple of weeks time Jane and I are back in London baby-sitting for our 2 year old grandson Rafe and then in January off to California to meet for the first time our granddaughter Delaney who celebrates her 1st Birthday on Burns Day.

Meanwhile, early though it may be, Jane and I would like offer you in advance very warm Festive Greetings and of course A Guid New Year!

Thank you so very much for your fabulous support. We look forward to seeing you more often in 2022.

Yours aye,

David Mackay

Autumn Dinner

On 28th October, over 80 members and guests of Friends of Scottish Rugby attended the annual Autumn Dinner, the first post lockdown autumn dinner. The President David Mackay welcomed everyone and asked the Rev Alastair Cumming to say Grace.

The members and guests were piped to dinner by Ralph Potter. After the Loyal Toast given by Alistair Douglas and "Absent Friends" given by the President, the President introduced the guest speaker Sir Ian McGeechan.

The President outlined how both he and his wife Jane had both been present at some of "The Geech's" greatest moments starting with his first cap at Murrayfield against New Zealand in 1972, and 1976 when he was part of the winning Calcutta Cup team. He subsequently was the Head Coach for the British and Irish Lions and toured in 1989,1993,1997 and 2009. Appointed Director of Rugby at Wasps in 2005, he took them to win the Premiership in 2007. In 2010 he joined Gloucester before leaving shortly thereafter to join local rivals Bath.

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Sir Ian McGeechan and Ian "Robbo" Robinson

In 2011 he was appointed Director of Rugby at Bath. In 2011 he was appointed Executive Chairman of Leeds Carnegie. Appointed OBE in 1990, he was knighted in 2010. The Geech is considered to be one of the finest ever rugby brains

Ian opened his speech by apologising for his wife not being present, he had forgotten to make arrangement for their dogs, and hence she was not able to come - he expected to be forgiven by Christmas! Ian recounted that when he had been ill in New Zealand in 2005, our founder the late Donald McNab had sent him details of his thirty-one relatives living there who would be willing to accommodate and help Ian.

Sandy Carmichael had sadly died just the day before the Autumn Dinner and Ian recounted what a genuine and kind person Sandy had been. He recalled the infamous game at Canterbury where Sandy was invalided out after multiple fractures to his cheek. In 1974 Sandy still had to pay for his Scotland playing jerseys (£35.75) and players were not given jerseys until 1975. Ian recounted how things were with touring sides in the pre-professional era, 75p daily allowance, wives and girlfriends could not go on the tour, being allowed one paid phone call home per week, dishonest referees!



The Geech captivated his audience

Ian said that everyone is born an amateur, you become a professional. He outlined the importance of Academies. The Super 6 will be an important pathway to give talented players the opportunity to play amongst peers. He believes that the current crop of Scottish players is the best pool of talent since the early 90's, and also strong in every department.



Adan Brodie gave the "Vote of Thanks"

Ian stated that he felt that there was a positive correlation between rugby tours and the Scottish team's performance immediately following the tour, in that the players learned so much from being part of a greater pool of world class talent. Things are looking good for Scotland this coming season.

At the conclusion of Ian's speech, President David MacKay stood to propose that Sir Ian be made an Honorary Member, which was approved unanimously by all the members in the room.

A Dundee Collection was made on behalf of Sir Ian's chosen charity for former Scotland prop Tom Smith who has been diagnosed with colon cancer. Adam Brodie gave the Vote of Thanks and intimated that for any future events Jock Meikle was willing to accommodate Sir Ian's dogs.

A large group of members accompanied by their guests retired to the Members Bar to continue the discussions on Scotland rugby team's chances in the forthcoming Autumn Internationals and of course next year's Six Nations.

Neil McNair

Visit to Scotland 5-7 November

As Les Fordham and I were planning to attend the Scotland v Australia game on Sunday 7th November along with David Mackay, the three of us took the opportunity to meet up with two of the clubs who have recently been in receipt of financial support from FoSR.

The first Club we visited on Friday evening was Dunfermline Rugby Club, based at McKane Park in Dunfermline. The Club has been around since 1893, and today runs everything from minis, juniors, seniors and womens team very successfully and with a lot of local support. We met President Kevin Storie who introduced us to a number of Club members including Hazel Swankie, who is the Club Secretary and also SRU Council Rep for the Midlands Region. Hazel introduced us to Kevin, Scott and Rorrie and the club "Commandos", who are a group of Club supporters who have tirelessly devoted their time to maintaining and upgrading the facilities at the Club. As FoSR had contributed to the installation of a new boiler and hot water system, we were taken to the bowels of the Clubhouse to see the new boiler. We were told that the new boiler and hot water system has made a huge difference to all the teams that play at Dunfermline.

Hazel Swankie

On Saturday morning we went to Union Park to see Corstorphine Rugby Club, another club that has been in existence for over a hundred years. There we met the President Steve Wright and Vice President David Gillespie and their team and heard about the history of the Club and the exciting plans they have for the future. We all learned a lot about sports field drainage, as it was explained how our support contributed to the new drainage system. We thought drainage was all about putting in "drains" and letting the water be drained off to a low part of the field, didn't every rugby club have that particular wet patch in the low-lying corner? At Corstorphine modern drainage was installed by way of vertical pipes that take the surface water down into the water table and into an underground stream. Corstorphine run two senior mens teams, a vintage mens team, two womens teams, junior and minis.

In the afternoon we went to watch the oldest rugby club in Scotland Edinburgh Accies play Aberdeen Grammar. Accies have a wonderful new stadium facility in the shape of a community café, clubhouse and bar called "The Place". Being in the heart of Edinburgh it's open to everyone for food and drink. We saw some good rugby, Edinburgh beating Aberdeen 28-7.

A glorious weekend of rugby finished with us all at BT Murrayfield watching Scotland beat the Wallabies 15-13!!

Neil McNair

London Scottish Colts

It's a new season, and for the lads at London Scottish Colts, it's great to be back playing Rugby again.

Full credit to the boys for keeping their focus and commitment up throughout last season and all those training sessions, they are now enjoying themselves putting it into practice on the pitch. Whilst it hasn't gone all their own way there have been some clinical wins. Most noticeably in their last run out against Wasps who were well beaten 31-5, with the Scots controlling the match from the start. It was great to see the structures that the coaches Mike, Neil and Emma have been working on in training being executed consistently throughout the game, pressuring the opposition into mistakes, which the guys gladly pounced on and led to a convincing win.

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Knowing what they can do, the boys now have a series of league games to focus on either side of Christmas, as they see how they fare up against some familiar foes.

The heads-up, 15 man style of rugby that the coaches are creating is obviously going down well with the players who are thoroughly enjoying themselves on the field. It's been great to see the things trialled in training, being honed, and then used to great effect in matches. With the Scots, everyone of them is a potential ball carrier and confident with the ball in hand. Playing at tempo, and with great support, it soon shows up any defensive weaknesses in the opposition. Match this with a forwards unit that has been absolutely outstanding this year, marching opposition teams back in the scrum and stealing frequent ball in the line-out, the team is definitely having fun, and its pretty good for the spectators too.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the support the team get from Friends of Scottish Rugby who have now sponsored the team for the last four years. With the FoSR sponsorship the London Scottish coaching team are able to take the boys from U16's, develop them both as a team and as individuals, so that by the their final year they are playing their best rugby. With a number of ex Colts moving to play senior rugby with the London Scottish Lions, and others planning on returning after university, we are helping develop London Scottish players of the future. In the meantime, they keep playing with a smile on their face, make some great mates, and show some great skills on the pitch. Thank you FoSR for making the London Scottish Colts team such a great place for exiled Scots to play in when in London.

Ian Hannah
Convener of Colts Rugby

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