

# RA News

October 2014



## NOTES ON THE LAST BOARD MEETING

The new Board took office after the AGM and now comprises: Ian Davies [Chairman], Ian Campbell [Vice-chairman], Paul Field [Treasurer] supported by Albert Astbury, Bill Darby, Eddie McGrath, Len Randall, Laura Ritchie and John Wilson.

All Board members are contactable via head office: [ra@footballreferee.org](mailto:ra@footballreferee.org).

### The Chairman's vision for the year 2014-15

- To build upon the successes of the 2014 AGM and Conference
- To seize the opportunity created from both events
- To create an RA brand to be proud of
- To make the RA relevant to all referees
- To increase membership
- To improve the commercial opportunities of the RA shop in partnership with Sporting Touch
- To ensure regular communications with the membership
- To encourage County RAs to work in partnership with their County FA
- To lead a Board working together in the best interests of the RA and its members

### New Benevolent Fund Trustees

Reg Pullen [Alton] and Mike Potter [Norwich] have agreed to become Trustees of the Benevolent Fund. Both have a long association with the RA as local administrators and their experience will be invaluable.

### Refereeing Magazine

It has been confirmed that there will be no more printed versions of the FA Refereeing magazine; all future editions will be an e-zine, emailed out to registered referees.

### Board members visiting LRAs to make presentations

The current policy introduced several years ago on expenses for Board members travelling to present awards will be continued. LRA's would meet the presenter's expenses if he/she sought any recompense.

### New website and other IT developments

Derek Mansfield [Sussex] is finalising the development of the new RA website. He will be supported in the final stages by a Working Group that has been appointed by the Board.

**New RA website address is: [www.the-ra.org](http://www.the-ra.org)**

We are attempting to give the website a fresh, modern feel. As a priority it has been populated with the meeting details of all our LRAs. In the coming weeks it will be loaded with RA documentation for reading and downloading. This work is ongoing.



**Harry Hardy BEM.** Is Harry [Erewash Valley and an RA Life Member] the oldest referee still officiating in England? At 87 he has been officiating for 56 years and was honoured with his civil decoration as well as recognition from the FA for his long service. The Board sent their congratulations to him.

## **Board members leading on key areas**

Membership records – John / Paul; IT Working Group – Paul; Quest – Laura; Supplies – Paul; CRA Liaison meeting – Ian C; Press Officer – Albert; Publications – Ian C; RA-FA Youth Council liaison – Ian D; Eve of Final Rally - Paul

## **New Constitution is now operating**

The Board was pleased that the work that the Review Team had put into drafting the new Constitution was overwhelmingly supported by the membership – 98% in favour at the AGM. With this in mind the RA reminds members that from the 1<sup>st</sup> August new members now only pay £4 for insurance with no national membership fee for their first year. RAMMS has been updated to accommodate this by adding a NEW MEMBER Category. .

## **Review of the Conference Weekend**

Overall the whole weekend was a great success and the RA will need to remember that fact when working on fine tuning for 2015. Our President, David Elleray's, enormous contribution to the planning and presentation of the Saturday events was recorded.

This success, in no small part, could be attributed to the number of young people attending and how positively they integrated with the older generation. The mix we now have is excellent and has moved the Conference forward.

The response of our younger members to the references to the First World was significant and it was noticeable how they were moved.

From communications received from people outside the RA, including presenters, The FA and other members, it is being described as the best Conference they have been to and has now set the bar to not just maintaining that standard but to improving on it.

A small number of glitches did occur and these are noted for action to prevent repeats.

The AGM again clashed with the Youth Council event and it was important to find a way of enticing the younger members to the AGM. A number of possibilities / options were discussed.

The 2015 Conference will be at the Radisson Hotel, Heathrow on 3-4 July 2015 following some detailed considerations of many other possible venues. The advantages of the Radisson are a better value package and its ease of reaching from all parts of the country.

Further discussion has taken place on the timing of the AGM. The Board will need to consider members' views on:

- The cost implications of having two separate weekends instead of one if the AGM, as has been previously discussed, were not to be held during the Conference Weekend.
- Whether Friday afternoon is the ideal time for an AGM – what about early on Saturday or even Sunday morning? The RA Rules only state June/July for convening the AGM.

Members' views are again sought on this.

The AGM draft minutes have been circulated as per rule.

The RA Quiz on Sunday morning – a report had been sent to the membership.

## **CRA Liaison Meeting**

The date was confirmed as 11 January 2015 and will again be held in the Coventry area. In order to increase the age range of the delegates attending, up to three people per County may participate with the proviso that at least one must be under 25.

## **Eve of Final Rally.**

The date was confirmed 29 May 2015 again at No. 1 Great George St, Westminster. The Youth Council are looking at what input they can give to make it appealing/relevant to all ages including a possible training event at 6.30pm before presentation evening starting at 7.30pm. One option may be that the FA Cup Final referees to do a presentation.

Due to the poor recent attendances, discussion took place on alternative venues and structure with a possible date change to move it away from the Cup Final weekend. Youth Council will do work around how the event can be revamped to involve more young people and a training element. If there was a training element it may be more appealing to the FA. Members' views on this are needed.

### **Membership numbers**

The Board noted with concern that the repercussions of the sad events of 2001-2 were still having a negative effect. At the same time some LRAs were thriving and the reasons for these contrasts in success were debated. One clear formula for success is in having a local leadership that is enthusiastic and forward-looking. The January 2015 CRA Delegates' meeting will explore this in depth.

### **Quest.**

Applications are still arriving. LRAs still considering accreditation are reminded that paperwork has to be completed and evidence supplied to support the application for the auditors.

### **Sporting Touch / RAshop**

After the initial transfer of business, sales have grown and there has been huge demand for the new Nike kit.

RAshop sells Nike kits cheaper than A&H and on like-for-like items RAshop is consistently cheaper than A&H.

The move has been a massive marketing success with a significant Twitter following. Extremely positive feedback from the young people regarding the RA Shop leaflet and it is the best piece of sales marketing we have done in a long time.

A similar leaflet for marketing the RA core/premium brands should be considered as it could be used as sales flyer for new courses / RA-FA events.

One enormous plus from our partnership with Sporting Touch has been marketing skills they have brought to the party. A number of County FAs are now using us as their main supplier again.

However, marketing inside the RA is still very low key – the RA must raise its sales profile so that members/referees realise that RAshop gives competitive prices on a full range of kit including in-house badge embroidery. There is a need to step up sales to CRAs, LRAs, County FAs and to use Sporting Touch's know-how and contacts in marketing.

### **Board CRA Buddy Allocations**

Each Board member takes responsibility for liaising with County RAs and LRAs near his home:

Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Hampshire, Jersey, Guernsey, Sussex - Albert

Kent, Surrey, Middlesex, Berks & Bucks, Hertfordshire, London – Len

Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, AFA – Ian C

Birmingham & Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Huntingdonshire, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire – Laura

Somerset, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Worcester, Hereford – Paul

Staffordshire, Shropshire, Cheshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire – Ian D

Liverpool, Lancashire, Manchester – Eddie

North Riding, West Riding, East Riding, Lincolnshire, Sheffield & Hallamshire – John

Armed Services, Durham, Northumberland, Cumberland & Westmorland – Bill

### **Finance**

The finances are being carefully managed with the help of Walker Thompson.

One particular concern is the Physiocare – members need to be reminded of benefits available. This is operated as a service to members as a stand-alone individual members' optional benefit. It has an up-front cost to the RA that needs a minimum member participation level to break even; that level is not being reached. Members do not seem to know enough about the policy and its very attractive benefits. There is an urgent need for some improved marketing and LRAs can help in this.

### **Our seat on the FA Council**

David Crick's name had been put forward and was accepted to continue as the RA's representative on the FA Council.

## **Introduction of charges for attending preliminary FA Tutors' Course**

The Board dislikes this move by the FA. People wanting to become tutors will now have to pay a fee of £395 to the FA before they are admitted to the introductory training to become a Level 1 Tutor. It seems a backwards step. It will do nothing to increase the numbers of tutors some County FAs need.

The FA has introduced the fee on the basis that Tutors' work is all remunerated and they will each [eventually] recoup their expenditure in fees received. The Board is considering if there is any way in which we could support members wanting to become FA Tutors.

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **Head office personnel**

Lynn Harris has started work in the office as our new Office Administrator. Her normal hours will be Monday, Wednesday and Thursday each week starting early morning and leaving at around 3 p.m. She comes to us with a lot of very useful football experience having worked for the League Managers' Association. She has very quickly fitted in and is making a very productive contribution to the management.

To give cover over more hours per day, the office phone can be switched through to a Board member for urgent after-hours enquiries. Lynn will attend Board meetings and become our Minutes' Secretary.

### **The head office building**

As members know, the building has become far larger than is needed. We only have a single staff member plus occasional space for the odd visitor working in the building. The supplies' business, which took up half the total space, has been moved out. Having such large premises has, understandably, become a severe and unnecessary drain on the RA economy.

The Board put the long lease of the Unit 12 building up for sale. We are pleased to say we have a very strong prospect of securing a sale and at a sensible price. It could be that as early as November we will be formally announcing a move to alternative premises of suitable proportions in the Coventry area.

We have several suitable options for a new office, all of which can be taken up at very short notice.

More will appear on this very soon.

### **RAshop sales**

The business is now exclusively conducted by mail order although any member turning up at Sporting Touch's Nuneaton warehouse during normal working hours will not be refused custom.

The main link is still:

**[www.RAshop.co.uk](http://www.RAshop.co.uk)**

The full range of kit including the branded offers such as Nike is now available at very attractive prices. Adam will be your contact at Sporting Touch – he is now working exclusively on our referees' kit range.

There is a telephone sales hotline:

**024 7635 1490**

### **And finally .....**

..... a word of thanks to all those members who diligently completed the questionnaire on the success and any problems they found at the Conference Weekend. Your comments are valuable to us in planning an even more successful event for 2015 at the Heathrow Radisson on 3-4 July.