

Royal High rugby club looking for some urgent help

First Walkerburn, and now another venerable Scottish rugby club, has appealed for emergency assistance this closed season to stay afloat at senior level.

Royal High, founder members of the Scottish Rugby Union in 1873 – five years after their own inauguration, have acknowledged team-raising difficulties and are urging those with a connection to the club to assist them navigate current difficulties both on or off the pitch.

Earlier this week, too, Murrayfield Wanderers coach Ryan James told The Edinburgh Reporter that going into the 2023-24 season they had a nucleus of around a dozen players before numbers improved.

One option being considered at Royal High is to pull out of senior competitive fixtures – they finished bottom of East Division One last season – and re-build from the ground up as they have a thriving mini section.

Undoubtedly, Royal High rugby at senior level suffered when the school re-located from the East side of Edinburgh to Barnton in the 1970s with the rugby club eventually vacating a traditional home at Jock's Lodge in 1987 to follow suit.

Just how many stalwart members made the journey across town is open to question.

Two Royal High educated players – Iwan Tukalo and Gordon

Hunter – moved to Selkirk on leaving school and achieved Scotland caps, but the former was part of the team which enjoyed Division One status out of Jock's Lodge in the early 1980s.

Even earlier Colin Telfer was part of one of several outstanding school teams before playing his senior rugby at Hawick and gaining Scotland caps.

In the amateur era Royal High were regular contributors to a powerful Edinburgh District team through the likes of Jimmy Blake, Jim Dignall and Gerry McCosh.

Post war internationalists included Pringle Fisher and Tom McGlashan.

Royal High player Mark Morrison captained the British and Irish Lions in South Africa in 1903 while Angus Buchanan, another FP, scored the first international try when Scotland played England in an inaugural fixture at Raeburn Place in 1871.

A statement issued on social media says:

“Following a meeting of Royal High Rugby, held 30th May 2024, the club would like to make club members, supporters, players and former players aware of the situation the club finds itself in an open and honest manner.

The club has been dealing with a number of challenges particularly player participation meaning that withdrawal from competitive leagues is a distinct possibility for season 24/25.

Despite all efforts to recruit and retain players, the club has faced an ongoing struggle to assemble teams for the last 2 seasons. Additionally the burden of organising the club has taken its toll on committee members. Therefore we are seeking help and support from individuals willing to assist in

operating the club plus recruit players for next season otherwise league withdrawal will be the only option.

Royal High Rugby has a proud history dating back to 1868 and so it is exceptionally disappointing we find ourselves in this situation however the committee felt that being open and honest was in the wider interests of Scottish Rugby.

We hope the club continues to operate next season as it includes a thriving mini section, however the ability to do so will be dependent on securing additional committee support from the wider Royal High community.

The club wishes to thank all current and former players, members, sponsors and supporters as we know it's not been an easy journey, particularly in the last 2 seasons. To our committee we express gratitude as without them the club would not have achieved all that it has.

Anyone wishing to offer support and assistance is invited to email the club secretary:

secretaryrugby@royalhighrugby.com

