

# Ayr Rugby Football Club Ltd

## Annual Report 2024/25



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# Foreword

It is my great privilege to have served for my second term as Chairman of Ayr Rugby Football Club and to report on the 2024/25 season — a year that stands among the most transformative in our club's history. We have delivered excellence on the pitch, strengthened our role in the community, and invested in infrastructure that will serve generations to come. Ayr Rugby Football Club is not just evolving — it is thriving.

## On-Field Performance & Rugby Pathway

The 2024/25 season showcased the full strength of Ayr Rugby. Across minis, youth, senior and women's rugby, our teams demonstrated the resilience, ambition and culture that define our club.

At senior level, the 1st XV delivered an extraordinary campaign, capturing the Premiership title with 23 wins from 24 matches, scoring more than 1,100 points and securing 106 of 110 possible league points. Their 41–12 win over Watsonians at a jubilant Millbrae in April cemented their dominance. Standout individual achievements, including a 20-try season from Jamie Shedden, reflected the collective standard of the squad. Coaching excellence from Grant Anderson, assisted by Pat MacArthur and Frazier Climo, and inspiring leadership from Captain, Blair Macpherson set the tone for success.

The 2nd XV performed with consistency and quality, topping Intercity Stage 1 with 10 wins from 12 and finishing 3rd in Stage 2, proving once again the depth of our player pool and the strength of pathways into senior rugby.

Our 2AXV went unbeaten on the field and were crowned Arnold Clark West Region Reserve League Champions, winning 16 of 18 matches. Their season reminded us that social rugby has a vital role in sustaining club culture, camaraderie and identity.

The Ayr Ladies continued to grow in confidence and momentum, finishing 5th in their division and ending the season with 5 wins from 6 — proof of a strong culture and vibrant future.

Our pathway programmes also delivered success and development. The club now proudly supports more than 300 players aged 5–18, delivering an estimated 23,000 hours of rugby participation annually. The Millbrae Way — a coaching philosophy emphasising confidence, skills and inclusion — continues to strengthen our youth foundations.

## Youth Success & Player Development

Across our junior ranks, individual and collective performances were outstanding.



Our U16 squad enjoyed a remarkable season, winning 80% of their matches, reaching the Scottish Cup quarter-finals and advancing to the West Cup final. The squad also produced multiple representative athletes, including Kyle Scott, Oliver King, Blair Black and Ben McKinley, who were all selected for the Glasgow and the West U16 squad. Kyle and Oliver were further invited to national development camps, highlighting the calibre of players being nurtured at Ayr.

At U18 level, Ayr/Wellington competed in the top national conference, delivering strong results against elite opposition including victories over West of Scotland and Currie Chieftains. The team reached the quarter-finals of the National Youth Cup and the final of the West Youth Cup, continuing our transition from youth rugby to senior opportunities. Representative honours again stood out: five players earned Glasgow & the West U18 selection, contributing to a 43–26 win over Caledonia. These achievements are not the work of players alone — they reflect thousands of hours from volunteer coaches, parents, senior player mentors and the Ayr Community Rugby Trust. Our thanks go to them all.

## **Infrastructure & Facilities – A Historic Milestone**

February 2025 will be remembered as a defining moment in the story of Millbrae. On the 6th of February nearly 600 supporters, dignitaries, charity partners and media joined us to celebrate the opening of our new access road and state-of-the-art all-weather pitch.

Led by Alan Macdonald and former British & Irish Lions captain Rob Wainwright, the ceremony marked the culmination of Phase 1 & 2 of the Millbrae redevelopment, a project that took 3 years to plan but only 10 months to execute. These phases have transformed our home ground: improved access, expanded parking, a full-sized multi-sport 3G surface, fencing and energy-efficient flood lighting. The impact has been immediate — Millbrae is once again buzzing with regular rugby activity and our teams no longer depend on external training venues.

The legacy of this redevelopment extends far beyond rugby. Millbrae is becoming a modern community hub. None of this would have been possible without The Macdonald Legacy. Ayr Rugby Club continues to lead from the front in Ayrshire, not simply as a club, but as a civic partner committed to improving life in the local community. The second Ayr Santa Dash took place on the 15th of December 2024 bringing together families, charities, and sports clubs along the Ayr seafront. Hundreds of participants braved the cold to raise funds for Ayrshire Hospice, Ayrshire Cancer Support, Harbour Ayrshire and many local sports clubs and organisations.

For the second year in a row, we partnered with Harbour Ayrshire to host the Dam Park Charity Sleepout, uniting volunteers, supporters and local organisations to raise awareness of addiction recovery and homelessness. The event raised more than £24,000, with every penny supporting essential counselling and reintegration programmes.

We also continued our longstanding support for Ayrshire Hospice through hosting of It's a Knockout at Dam Park — a colourful fundraising day that embodied community, compassion and teamwork. Grassroots engagement was delivered through the Ayr Community Rugby Trust, which delivered coaching in schools, promoted inclusive rugby, and expanded girls' and women's participation initiatives.

Sport is not only competition — it is community. Nowhere was this better illustrated than in this year's Pickles Cup, where Ayr Cricket Club reclaimed bragging rights in a thrilling last-ball victory over the Ayr Rugby Select XI. The event continues to honour the legacy of club legend, Andy Pickles and to deepen friendship between two of Ayr's great sporting clubs.





We continued to strengthen our board of Directors with 2 high-value appointments. The 8 Directors of Ayr RFC engage on a daily basis and meet monthly working closely with all areas of the club. This is a huge commitment and I thank all our Directors for volunteering their time and talent to our club.

## Marketing & Sponsorship Report — 2024/25

Over the past year, Ayr Rugby Football Club has continued to strengthen its digital presence, achieving significant growth across all social media platforms. Our branding and output have been elevated establishing Ayr RFC as a leader in Scottish club rugby's online engagement. Our channels reflect a consistent visual style, enhancing connections with our supporters and sponsors. Instagram has been a key focus, targeting younger audiences and delivering exceptional results. Our reach has increased by over 200% with 9000 followers and profile visits in excess of 130,000. Facebook has also seen improvement, with 430,000 hits contributing directly to higher ticket sales, hospitality bookings, and 3G pitch rentals.

Coverage has expanded to youth, girls, and U18/U16 Open Conference teams, helping grow the club's reach beyond senior rugby. Matchday imagery has been well received, strengthening player-supporter relationships. The monthly online Pink & Black magazine continues to develop and we welcome new contributors who would like to get involved or share their memories. Sponsorship remains vital to club income. Despite a challenging economy, renewals remain strong, with our main sponsor Albert Bartlett committed until Summer 2029. The transition to the SNAP sponsorship platform will centralise agreements and support future growth.

## Looking Ahead – Phase 3 and beyond

With Phases 1 & 2 complete, we now prepare to embark on Phase 3 of the redevelopment which will start in February 2026. Planning approval has been secured for a multi-purpose building that will include:

- A performance gym for athletes
- A dedicated club shop
- Refurbished clubhouse
- A community-access gym
- Inclusive, modern changing facilities
- A golf simulator to diversify revenue
- A sustainability-led energy strategy

This next phase will secure our long-term future and establish Millbrae as a premier sporting venue in Scotland.

## Closing Remarks

Our achievements this season have been exceptional — but they are not accidental. They are the result of a united community: volunteers who give freely of their time, coaches who mentor with patience and passion, sponsors who believe in our values, and players who wear the pink and black jersey with pride. Ayr Rugby Club is moving forward with momentum and purpose. The foundations are strong. Our ambitions are clear. The future is bright.

Thank you for your continued support.



**Brian Williamson**

Chairman, Ayr Rugby Football Club Ltd



# Club Structure

The club benefits from a variety of skills and experience from our group of directors, all of whom support the club on a voluntary, unpaid basis.



## **Brian Williamson (Chairman/Project Lead Millbrae Development)**

Brian is Chairman of the Board of Directors for Ayr Rugby Football Club Limited and former Vice-President and committee member of the previous set up. Brian has been involved at Ayr RFC for over 40 years, playing in the mini/midi sections and playing for the social teams when not working. Brian is Managing Director of Ekko Waste Solutions, ABC4D Baby Scanning, WMA Group and Cambusdoon Ltd. In addition to chairing the board, Brian has been instrumental in securing the Macdonald Legacy and is project lead for the redevelopment of Millbrae.



## **Drew Young (Club President/Committee Rep)**

Drew is President of Ayr Rugby Football Club Limited and has been involved with the club for 40 years. Before becoming President, Drew had many roles including youth coach, ground convenor and committee member (since 2004). Drew is a farmer by occupation and has been Chairman of Girvan Early Growers for the last 16 years. Drew's business network is extensive and he has introduced a number of major sponsors to the club including our main sponsor Albert Bartlett.



## **Richard Longmuir (Marketing/PR Director)**

Richard is the Marketing/PR Director of Ayr Rugby Football Club Limited. Richard is Creative Director of Launch Digital and brings his digital media knowledge to the board, leading on our digital strategies which encompass our website and social media channels. Richard is also responsible for overseeing the production of our excellent monthly newsletter, the Pink & Black, the Pink & black Podcast and other media related activities.



## **Andrew McMorland (Financial Director)**

Andrew has been an accountant for over 35 years and has been a partner at Smith & Wallace for 17 years. Andrew has experience in business management, finance and fundraising and has also been involved in various 3rd sector organisations including charities, voluntary groups and member led clubs. Andrew leads on reviewing the clubs trading position, setting of budgets and assisting with project management. Andrew sees the role as an opportunity to give some of his time and experience back to the local community.





### **Graham Duncan (Secretary)**

Graham is Club Secretary of Ayr Rugby Football Club Limited and has been involved with rugby for over 30 years as a player, coach, and committee member. A former player of 23 years and Level 2 coach from P1 to U18s, he is also part of the walking rugby group and supports the 2nd XV as Team Manager and assists on the Volunteer Board. Retiring in 2023 after 30 years with Police Scotland, mainly in CID, Graham brings extensive leadership, governance, and organisational experience from chairing multi-agency meetings, representing Police Scotland nationally, and delivering project work.



### **Brian Calder (Commercial Director)**

Brian is the Commercial Director of Ayr Rugby Football Club Ltd and has had a long association with the Club both as a player and as a sponsor. As a previous Managing Director of Wallaces Express and Tennents, Brian brings over 45 years experience in the drinks industry to help with the commercial development of Millbrae and the Clubhouse.



### **Neil Howie (Community Director)**

Neil is the Community Director of Ayr Rugby Football Club Ltd. Neil is a retired Director of Howie of Dunlop. Neil coached his son's age group from P6 to Under 18 level and after that formed the Ayr Community Rugby Trust Charity. Neil brings his experience of charitable status to the board and the community.



### **Billy McHarg (Rugby Director)**

Billy is well known in Scottish Rugby and has previously served as Club Treasurer for 25 years and Club President for 13 years. Billy has operated his own accountancy practise for nearly 40 years. Billy has extensive contacts in the game and is passionate about developing Ayr RFC's rugby offering and performance at all levels.



# Staff Structure

We also have a number of key individuals who drive the success of the club.

## **Graeme Ferguson (General Manager)**

Running Ayr Rugby Football Club is not for the faint-hearted. There are literally hundreds of tasks that need performed every week to keep things running smoothly. It is impossible for those in charge, even with our army of volunteers, to keep on top of all of the day-to-day details. The General Manager is a full time position which encompasses the management of all off-field activities reporting to the Commercial Director and attending board meetings. The role is varied and includes overseeing match day, the club shop, clubhouse/bar and managing our sponsors (new & current).

## **Lucille McGuinness (Bar Supervisor)**

Employed by the trading arm of our club (Millbrae Ltd) the Bar Supervisor looks after the clubhouse dealing with staffing, cleaning, functions, events and match-day. It is a difficult role due to the nature of trading at Millbrae, one week may be quiet and the next week could be a major event like Ladies Day. Currently the Bar Supervisor also helps with our club shops Click & Collect service. The Bar Supervisor works closely with the General Manager and reports to the Directors of Millbrae Ltd & the main board's Commercial Director.

## **Mark Carrick (Media/PR)**

Ayr Rugby Club is regarded as having the best digital presence in Scottish Rugby. Built up over several years, we have a full-time employee reporting to the board's Marketing Director. The role covers all aspects of the club's branding, design, and communications, including managing the website and social media, producing the Pink & Black newsletter, matchday programmes, and member campaigns. Responsibilities also include planning and promoting events and facilities, delivering live coverage from 1st XV matchdays, and creating regular weekly content to engage members and fans. Sponsorship and marketing materials are designed in-house, ensuring consistency across all platforms and maintaining Ayr Rugby Club's leading digital presence.

## **David Courtney (Grounds/Maintenance)**

Ayr Rugby Football Club now has two grounds, Millbrae & Dam Park, both of which need considerable upkeep. We pay for South Ayrshire Council to cut the grass on the pitches but the rest of the grounds need maintained. This has been sub-contracted to David Courtney for the past few years who does an excellent job keeping the grounds looking tip top all year round. This is a sub-contracted role that currently reports into the Commercial Director.





## **Pat McArthur (Director of Rugby)**

The on-field activities come under the remit of the Director of Rugby whose job it is to oversee all rugby and administration across all age groups and sections. This is a sizeable role and we have recently set up a “Rugby Forum” to ensure smooth communication through the different sections of the club. This position attends board meetings and reports directly to the board on all matters.

## **Carrie Ross (Bookkeeper)**

It has been a difficult process, but we are now in a position where the club has monthly management accounts which are invaluable when making important decisions regarding budgets, finances and affordability. It also helps the Board of Directors to create accurate business plans and is essential when it comes to annual auditing. The bookkeeper prepares monthly management accounts and has them available before every Directors Meeting. This is a sub-contracted role that reports to the Board of Directors.

## **Lee Steward (Fixture Secretary)**

## **Louise McLauchlan (Child Protection Officer)**

## **Robert Gilliland (Youth Convenor)**

## **Shaun Markey (Mini Convenor)**

## **Stephen Cairns (Girls Convenor)**



# On Field

## Senior Men

The first team had a standout 2024/25 season, asserting their dominance in Scotland's newly formed premiership under the leadership of head coach, Grant Anderson. Renowned for their physical presence and competitive squad driving the team to over 1000 points scored and only 1 loss throughout the season. This season, the first team won 23 out of 24 games, collecting 106 out of 110 possible points with the highest victory margin of 90 points to 0 at Mansfield Park.

The first teams success was built on a strong foundation of powerful scrumming, effective mauling tactics with deadly finishers littered across the back line. The first team secured a home final in front of a packer out Millbrae defeating Watsonians 41-12 at Millbrae in April 2025 to end the first Premiership league since the disbandment of the Super series as Champions of Scotland. Special mention to Jamie Shedon scoring an impressive 20 tries throughout the season.

Head Coach – Grant Anderson (BT's)

Assistant Coaches – Pat MacArthur (Big Pig) and Frazier Climo (Piggy)







## **Ayr 2nd Team**

The 2024/25 season was a positive and competitive year with the XV enjoying great success. The 2XV competed in the Inter City Reserve Stage 1 League finishing top on 52 points playing 12 games and winning 10 with a positive points differential of 302 points. Following this the 2XV finished third in the Intercity Reserve stage 2 League with a strong performance against tough opposition.

Head Coach – Dean Kelbrick

Assistant Coach – Craig Gossman

## **Ayr/Millbrae 2AXV**

The 2aXV had an impressive campaign winning 16 out of 18 games finishing the league as Arnold Clark West region Reserve League Champions. The 2aXV were unbeaten on the pitch winning 16 out of 18 games, only recording 2 losses due to injuries within the squad. Special mentions to Josh Currie and Max Pickles creating a team that pushes the importance of social rugby within the club and community.





## Senior Ladies

The ladies team demonstrated outstanding character, resilience, and togetherness throughout what proved to be both a challenging and exciting season. Despite facing strong opposition across the league, the squad continued to grow in confidence and capability each week, driven by an inclusive environment and a team culture that prioritised hard work, enjoyment, and mutual support.

A key success of the season was the continued growth in squad numbers, reflecting the team's commitment to welcoming new players, developing emerging talent, and ensuring rugby at Ayr remains open and accessible to women of all ages and experience levels. This expansion of the squad not only strengthened training intensity but also created greater depth across the team, contributing significantly to on-field performances.

On the pitch, the ladies delivered an impressive run of results, finishing 5th in the Arnold Clark West Region League Division 1. Their determination shone through during the latter stages of the season, where they secured five wins from their final six fixtures, showcasing their competitiveness, improved cohesion, and growing attacking threat.

Ending the campaign with such momentum has placed the squad in a strong position as they prepare for the 2025/26 season, with confidence high, depth improving, and a clear sense of direction for the year ahead. The foundations built this season, both culturally and competitively, provide the perfect platform for further growth, development, and success.







## Youth Section

### Ayr RFC U16s

The 2024/25 season for Ayr RFC U16s, was marked by strong performances, development, and representative honors. With a playing squad of ~ 30 players, the team showed consistency and unity throughout a highly competitive campaign win 80% of their games

Coming together from two different previous groups the squad reached the quarter-finals of the Scottish Cup, where they narrowly lost to the eventual tournament winners after a hard-fought encounter. Building on that momentum, the squad advanced to the final of the West Cup, demonstrating their growing maturity, teamwork, and determination against strong regional opposition.

The season was also notable for individual achievements. Kyle Scott, Oliver King, Blair Black, and Ben McKinley earned selection for the Glasgow and the West U16 representative squad, a reflection of the depth of talent within the group. Further recognition came as Kyle and Oliver received invitations to attend Scottish national development camps, highlighting the club's success in nurturing players ready for higher honors.

Overall, the 2024/25 season underlined the squad's exceptional progress, commitment, and spirit—laying strong foundations for their transition into U18 rugby and the senior pathway at Ayr RFC.





## Ayr RFC U18s

Ayr Rugby Club Under 18 team, competing as Ayr/Wellington for the last season, experienced a mixed 2024-2025 season in Scottish youth rugby's top league. While facing challenges in league play, the squad made notable strides in cup competitions, emphasizing player development. The season built a solid foundation for future growth, highlighted by selection for the new Open Competition pilot in season 2025/26.

League Performance: inspiresport Boy's U18 National 1 Club Conference

Ayr/Wellington played competitively in seven matches whilst struggling in the latter stages of games due to squad depth in numbers managed strong notable wins against West of Scotland and Currie Chieftains (Scottish cup finalists).

Boy's U18 National Youth Cup

The team advanced to the National quarterfinals following early-round successes but exited after a 19-34 away loss to Hawick Youth in November 2024. This match demonstrated their competitiveness and several disallowed tries provided a scoreline that didn't reflect the boys hard fought performance.

Boy's U18 West Youth Cup

The season's pinnacle was reaching the final in this competition. Securing a narrow 27-22 semifinal win over West of Scotland. In the final Marr college were too powerful, in a physically demanding encounter, reflecting valiant effort by the boys and an early injury to Scotland U18 scrum half Cammy McGarey which upset the rhythm of the game which was very much in Ayr's favour.

Individual Achievements and Development - Standout players boosted the campaign: Dan Simpson, Cammy McGarey, Adam Given, Aaron McLauchlan, and Jake Paton represented Glasgow & the West U18 in January 2025 inter-district matches, contributing to a 43-26 victory over Caledonia U18. A notable mention for Jake Paton and Charlie Windows who captained the side during a challenging season.





## Girls Section

Ayr Rugby Club girls section built on the good work in previous seasons and continued to go grow and develop the girl's game in the 2024/25 season. We started the season with 22 girls playing rugby at U14 level and finished the season with over 40 girls playing rugby with teams at U12, U14 and U16 level.

The U12 team grew from 2 players at the start of the season to 14 players by the end of the season. The girls played in 12 development tournaments over the course of the season, with massive improvements in performance from all the girls. The U14 team lost a number of players at the start of the season, with girls moving up to the U16 team. They recruited 5 new players through the course of the season and played in 20 tournaments winning over 80% of their games. They have had a remarkable season with some amazing performances from the girls throughout the year. The U16 team had a great season, having joined up with Kilmarnock Rugby Club girls to play in the league and the West Cup. The girls, who had all moved up from U14 the season before, quickly adapted to the demands of U16 rugby and put in some great performances culminating in the U16s wets plate final, where they narrowly lost to a strong Galloway team.

After a number of years where Ayr had minimal representation at district level girls' rugby, we were able to nominate 6 girls for the U15s player development hub programme, with 3 of the girls, Chloe Smith, Lucy Reid and Brodie McKenzie being selected for the U16s girls regional training squad. We also put one of our players forward for the U16 district trials in January where Salma Shaheen was picked for the district team. Following on from this Salma was selected for the Scotland U16s pathway performance programme and represented Scotland U16s in an international festival.

We also brought two new coaches into the girl's section, with Ayr Ladies team players Robynn Gibson and Lily Grace joining the coaching team. The addition of these two new coaches has been a massive success giving the girls positive female role models, improving the standard of coaching and aligning the coaching the girls receive more closely with that of the Ladies Team. It has also allowed us to offer Rugby Academy sessions for the girls, bringing them into line with the coaching the boys receive.







## Mini Section

For as long as we can remember youth rugby has been the foundation of our club. We continue to enjoy strong participation numbers from Primary 1 (age 5) through to U18s. We have just over 300 registered players (male and female) in our mini and youth sections which equates to around 23,000 hours of rugby participation in a season (based on 75% attendance per session).

All age groups are run by volunteer coaches who need to meet the minimum standard of coaching level from the SRU. However, several coaches hold higher coaching qualifications.

From S1 up, the coaching teams are supplemented by senior players who are allocated to teams as part of the 'Millbrae Way' which aims to deliver consistent coaching techniques developed across the club. Age groups have access to specialist coaches as and when required as they progress through the Age Grade Law Variations. The strength of our youth section is a vital part of our club and a significant source of pride.



## Walking Rugby

The Ayr Walking Rugby section continues to thrive, with Monday morning sessions at Millbrae bringing players together for friendly fixtures, followed by a well-earned bacon roll, coffee, and chat. The group prides itself on being open to all – whether you’ve never picked up a rugby ball or are returning after years away, everyone is welcome. The banter is as important as the rugby, adding to the fun!

This year the group received sponsorship for new strips, while continuing the tradition of sponsoring a player in both the senior men’s and women’s squads. Numbers continue to grow, and new male and female participants are always welcome.

Highlights included a trip to the Hive in Edinburgh, where 15 members took part in the Edinburgh Walking Rugby Festival at Murrayfield. Playing as the Millbrae Shufflers and Ayr Strollers, the teams faced Annan, Kelso, Edinburgh Wanderers, and Midlothian. Although non-competitive, the Ayr sides achieved an impressive clean sweep – played 8, won 8 – while enjoying the friendship and spirit of the day. Closer to home, the group looks forward to welcoming friends from Old Leamingtonians RFC in October for another enjoyable get-together.

There was also a special buzz when Walking Rugby players were joined by 1st XV sponsored player Jamie McAughtrie, fresh from scoring his first try of the season against Glasgow Hawks, and fellow Ayr prospect Dan Simpson. Their presence added to the morning’s energy, and the session was followed, as always, with good food and plenty of laughter.







# Off Field

## Fireworks Festival 2024

On the 8th of November we held our first fireworks festival at Dam Park and it was a resounding success. Moving from Millbrae for the first time created a significantly increased workload due to every part of the planning process needing to be redrawn - we even needed clearance from Air Traffic control due to the location.

While there was a little disappointment from some about the change in venue, the benefits of Dam Park were considerable - the amount of parking available, the local road network, the space available on site and the viewing experience. For the first time ever we didnt have a bonfire, but instead hired the enormous screen from Scottish Racing to display a fire along with slots for sponsors and advertisers.

We welcomed 5,000 visitors to the event which featured a huge fairground, multiple vendors for food and refreshments, music from DJ Derek Ross and of course the fantastic firework display. Again the event was fully ticketed so we could comply with our public entertainment license regulations.

It is a significant event to host and involves partnerships with every stakeholder imaginable - SAC, NHS, Fire, Police, Roads, Waste, Neighbourhood services, licensing, Paths, and building standards to name some of them. It also involves a small army of volunteers to help on the night, without them it would not be possible, so we are very grateful for their efforts.

The event returned a profit of £34,000 up from £23,000 the previous year. This year the event will be held on 7th of November and we expect the format to broadly the same with a few additions to enhance the experience.







## President's Lunch

Our Annual President's Lunch was held on 29th November and was a huge success.

Robbie Duncan was the usual excellent host and our guest speaker for the day was John Gahagan, who entertained the guests with hilarious tales from his football days.

The President's lunch is the biggest fundraiser of the year. There is a raffle, silent auction, and the main auction along with 'Guess the time' to win a TAG watch donated by Laings. In the auction, we had a huge selection of excellent lots, but the most popular was the exclusive whisky tasting for 8 guests with Alan Macdonald in Brigend Castle, just across the Auld Brig. It was so popular it sold 3 times!

Many thanks to all members and sponsors who donated items for the raffle and auction, and to those who attended and bid so generously.

This event raised £43,000, well up on the previous year.



## Santa Dash

Festive spirit was out in full force on Sunday, 15th of December, as hundreds of participants took part in the Ayr Santa Dash. Organised by Ayr Rugby Club, Ayr United and Ayr Cricket Club, the event brought together families, community groups and local charities for a morning filled with fun, exercise and fundraising.

The event began at Ayr Beach Playpark, where volunteers greeted entrants with Christmas music, special guests and free Santa hats. Bullish Coffee was also on site, offering hot drinks and snacks to keep the cold at bay. Participants of all ages arrived from 11:00am, dressed in Christmas themed fancy dress, ready to take on the 5K route. At midday, the Santa-clad crowd set off along the esplanade, jogging, walking, running and wheeling their way toward Millbrae.

Organiser Brian Williamson emphasised what is at the heart of the event, "The Ayr Santa Dash is all about community," he said. "It is about our town's sports clubs putting on an event for the whole town and encouraging all sporting groups, community organisations and charities to use the platform to raise money."

Fundraising was at the core of the Santa Dash, with profits from entry fees being shared among three headline charities: Ayrshire Hospice, Ayrshire Cancer Support and Harbour Ayrshire. Participants were also encouraged to support causes close to their own hearts, through online fundraising platforms or traditional sponsor sheets. From youth sports teams to local charities, many groups seized the opportunity to raise money for the year ahead.

Families, seasoned runners and first-timers embraced the spirit of the event. The route led the Santas from coastline to community hub, ending at Millbrae where they were rewarded with a medal and refreshments. Plans are already in place for Ayr Santa Dash 2025 which will take place on Sunday the 21st of December at 12.00pm starting at Ayr Beach Playpark and finishing at Millbrae.







## Dam Park Charity Sleepout

Ayr Rugby Club and Harbour Ayrshire joined forces for the second year running for a powerful night of fundraising and awareness at the Dam Park Charity Sleepout 2025. The event brought together sports, community spirit and social purpose.

Hosted at Dam Park Stadium, the event invited volunteers, families and businesses to sleep outdoors for one night. The goal was not only to raise funds and awareness, but to give participants an insight into the challenges faced by vulnerable people across Ayrshire.

A series of activities preceded the overnight challenge. Music was played and sports events were held on the main pitch and running track helping people connect. A key moment of the evening came during a talk led by Harbour Ayrshire support workers and volunteers, who described the charity's work with individuals recovering from addiction. Personal testimonies highlighted just how crucial safe environments, consistent guidance and emotional support can be in rebuilding lives.

As temperatures dropped, participants settled into their makeshift shelter and volunteers remained on site throughout the night to ensure safety, offer hot drinks and share encouragement.

The sleepout concluded at sunrise with breakfast rolls and closing remarks, the 2025 Dam Park Charity Sleepout raised over £24,000 with all proceeds going directly to Harbour Ayrshire's services, including counselling, recovery support and reintegration programmes.

The partnership between Ayr Rugby Club and Harbour Ayrshire has established the sleepout as more than a one-night event. It shows that when sport and community organisations stand together, they can drive meaningful change and give hope to those who need it most.





## It's a Knockout

Ayr Rugby Club continued its commitment to community partnership in 2025 through another successful year working alongside the Ayrshire Hospice. Our shared values of compassion and teamwork were showcased during the Hospice's fundraising event, It's a Knockout, hosted at Dam Park in June.

The event brought together dozens of teams from local businesses, sports clubs and community organisations. Club volunteers supported the event, while a contingent of players and members entered as competitors, helping generate much-needed funds for hospice care across Ayrshire. Many from our junior and senior sections also attended to cheer on participants, reinforcing the family atmosphere the hospice works so hard to create.

The Ayrshire Hospice provides vital support to individuals and families facing life-limiting illness, and the Club is proud to assist in promoting its programmes. Through participation in community events such as It's a Knockout, and through direct engagement with hospice staff and fundraising initiatives, we aim to ensure that Ayr Rugby Club remains a positive force in Ayrshire well beyond the pitch. We look forward to continuing this relationship in the coming year and further strengthening the bond between Ayr Rugby Club and the Ayrshire Hospice.







## Pickles Cup

Ayr Cricket reclaimed their crown in dramatic fashion, edging out Ayr Rugby Select with a 4-wicket victory in a nail-biting last-ball thriller. A captain's knock from Braydon Riggs proved decisive, guiding the cricketers home and restoring bragging rights at Cambusdoon.

The annual contest — played in honour of Ayr cricket and rugby legend Andy Pickles — continues to strengthen the ties between the neighbouring clubs and celebrates their shared heritage within the community. Since its inception in 2020, the Pickles Cup has delivered gripping cricket and unforgettable moments, with the pandemic providing only a brief pause to the rivalry.

Last year, the Rugby Select stunned the favourites for their first-ever victory. This year, they arrived intent on defending their title, once again led by skipper Frazier Climo and bolstered by talent from across the club. Their confidence was matched by the Cricket Club's determination to reclaim the silverware.

Batting first, the Rugby Select posted a competitive target. However, just as they had in 2024, the contest came down to the leadership of the captains. Riggs anchored the run chase, mixing composure with aggression and leaving the crowd on edge as the final over unfolded. With everything on the line, he held his nerve — securing victory on the very last delivery. The intensity on the field was matched only by the camaraderie off it. Players from both clubs shared handshakes, laughs, and plenty of post-match refreshments as the Pickles Cup once again fulfilled its purpose: celebrating sport, community, and friendship.

With the series now balanced once more, anticipation for the 2026 showdown is already building. Ayr Rugby will be eager to reclaim the trophy, while Ayr Cricket will look to defend it on home turf — and if history is any guide, the next chapter of the Pickles Cup will be every bit as dramatic.







## Ladies Day

Ayr Rugby Club was delighted to host its Annual Ladies Day on Friday 13th September 2024, once again proving to be one of the standout social events of the club calendar. The celebration took place in a beautifully decorated marquee within the beer garden, where 275 guests enjoyed an afternoon of entertainment and fundraising.

The event successfully brought together members, friends, and supporters of the club, creating a vibrant atmosphere that reflected the spirit and generosity of our community. Through auctions, raffles, and generous donations, Ladies Day 2024 raised an outstanding £8,000 in support of the Teenage Cancer Trust. This contribution will help fund vital support for young people and families affected by cancer, continuing the club's commitment to making a meaningful difference beyond the rugby pitch.

Ayr Rugby Club extends thanks to Eilidh Goodwin, whose hard work and organisation made the event possible, and to all who attended and contributed. Your participation ensures that Ladies Day remains not only a fun and occasion, but also a force for good.



## Marketing & Design

Over the past year, the club's social media presence has continued to strengthen, with growing follower numbers, sustained engagement, and wider reach across all platforms. Since taking on the role in December 2023, Mark Carrick has elevated the club's branding and digital output, establishing Ayr RFC as a leader in Scottish club rugby's online presence. Our channels now reflect the club's identity with greater consistency and impact, strengthening connections with supporters and sponsors.

Building on last year's strong results, we have seen even greater growth over the past twelve months, clear evidence that we are moving in the right direction.

A key focus this year has been Instagram, targeting younger audiences. This strategy has delivered outstanding results: between 1st September 2024 and 21st September 2025, our reach grew by **217.8% to 254,000**, content interactions doubled to **90,000**, and profile visits rose **77.8% to 130,000**. We are now approaching **9,000** followers, having added nearly 2,000 in the past year.

Facebook has also seen impressive progress, with visits up **41.9% to 430,000**, follower numbers increasing by **10.6%** as we near **11,000**, and significant rises in link clicks, **63.1%** on Facebook and **69%** on Instagram, driving sales of tickets, hospitality, and 3G pitch bookings.





We have successfully retained sponsors across our social media channels, including support for the Monday Night Roundup, Dream Team, Player of the Match, Matchday content, and, most recently, Launch as sponsor of the Weekly Highlights.

With the introduction of the Open Conference for our U18 and U16 squads, we have significantly expanded coverage of our youth teams, broadening the club's reach beyond senior rugby. We have also strengthened connections with our Girls' Section to ensure consistent promotion of the girls' game across our website and social media channels.

On matchdays, we now capture pre-match imagery both home and away, which has been particularly successful on Instagram. This content has been well received by supporters and has helped to build closer connections between players and fans, supported by the strong relationship between media staff and players.

Beyond social media, we launched a new website for Dam Park, designed to increase traffic and support our goal of boosting venue rentals. In addition, we have enhanced relationships with local Ayrshire news outlets, providing match reports, photography, and fixture information to ensure stronger coverage of the club both on and off the field.



# PINK & BLACK

AYR RUGBY CLUB PODCAST

Episode 2 now live with  
**Blair Macpherson.**



Alongside our digital output, other areas of communication and design continue to thrive. The club newsletter remains a valuable channel for keeping members and supporters informed and engaged, while our matchday programmes have become more visually engaging and content-rich, adding to the matchday experience. In addition, a wide range of signage has been designed and produced for the club this season, strengthening our visual identity across Millbrae and enhancing the professionalism of our facilities. We have also started the Pink & Black Podcast hosted by Callum Kerr and Frazier Climo, their first guest this year was 1st XV Captain and club great Blair Macpherson. We hope this podcast gives you a different insight into the happenings at Millbrae and brings younger fans closer to the team.

Looking forward, we have begun negotiations on a number of strategic partnerships with Ayrshire College, Kilmarnock Football Club, Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce, and the Loretta Doyle Judo Foundation, led by World Champion and Olympic/Commonwealth committee member Loretta Doyle, and StreetSoccer/Kitback run by David Duke MBE to share resources, strategy, coaching, physio expertise and best practice. These partnerships aim to grow multi-sport collaboration across Ayrshire and extend opportunities to people of all abilities, including those in the most deprived areas.

We are also in discussion with Ayr United, Marr Rugby, Ayr Cricket Club, and Ayr Racecourse, and remain open to collaboration with all sports and community groups. By working together, we aim to strengthen Ayrshire through equality, diversity, and shared community values.



## Sponsorship

Sponsorship is a vital part of the clubs income and we are very fortunate to have such a strong foundation of sponsors who renew every year. In the current economic climate it is becoming more and more difficult for businesses and therefore that directly affects what sponsorship is possible. However, being a charity now helps, as businesses can tick the Corporate and Social Responsibility box by supporting the work we do.

Sponsorship, a bit like membership, is a year round operation now. Deals are up for renewal every month which helps spread the workload as well as the income, it does however make it a little difficult to forecast. Our main sponsor, Albert Bartlett has committed to the club until Summer 2029 which is great news.

In order to centralise and future proof our sponsorship database we are in the process of converting all existing deals into a new platform called SNAP sponsorship. It provides a online platform to showcase our available opportunities as well as formalise existing agreements.

We continue to add value for all sponsors by encouraging as much engagement as possible, either through attending lunches, our business league events or simply spending more time around the club.

With the ending of our partnership with Wellington School, our club has been reunited with all teams at Millbrae at least once per week. This, along with football rentals on the 3G pitch, has brought a lot more traffic to Millbrae and therefore exposure for sponsors both existing and new. The 3G pitch has significant capacity and presents an opportunity for us to welcome more sponsors.







## Community Outreach & Impact

Ayr Rugby Club has continued to make a meaningful impact in Ayrshire throughout 2024 and 2025, building on its identity not only as a sporting organisation but as a cornerstone of community engagement, charity support and youth development. One of the club's most visible contributions came through its involvement in large-scale fundraising events. In December 2024, Ayr Rugby Club partnered with Ayr United and Ayr Cricket Club to deliver the Ayr Santa Dash, a festive 5km fun run designed to raise money for local causes. The event encouraged families, community groups and charities to take part, with profits distributed among headline beneficiaries including Ayrshire Hospice, Ayrshire Cancer Support and Harbour Ayrshire.

The club's charitable efforts continued into 2025 through its collaboration with Harbour Ayrshire at the Dam Park Charity Sleepout. Ayrshire Cancer Support at Ladies Day, The Ayrshire Hospice at It's a knockout. The partnerships showcase Ayr Rugby Club's commitment to social responsibility and reinforces the message that Millbrae and Dam Park are more than sporting venues—they are platforms for community engagement. Youth development has remained central to Ayr Rugby Club's outreach mission through the Ayr Community Rugby Trust. Throughout 2024 and into 2025, the club expanded its grassroots initiatives, delivering coaching sessions in schools across South Ayrshire and offering pathways for young players through its Minis and Youth sections. Continued emphasis was also placed on encouraging girls' and women's participation in rugby, with the club hosting taster sessions, training programmes and engagement campaigns focused on inclusion and access. Across 2024 and 2025, Ayr Rugby Club has demonstrated the influence that a sports organisation can have when it actively embraces community and social responsibility. Through charity fundraising, youth investment and partnerships with essential services, the club has shown that rugby is not only a game—it is a vehicle for positive change within the Ayrshire community.





## Charity Partnerships

Ayr Community Rugby Trust (ACRT) is responsible for delivering the community rugby programme in Ayrshire on behalf of Ayr Rugby Club. Our primary objective is to grow youth rugby, boys and girls, in the local community and delivery of that objective entails.

**Increasing participation in rugby:** We create opportunity through innovative programs to engage participants in rugby regardless of sex, age, sexual orientation or social status, removing barriers to participation in rugby union, ensuring the quality of delivery and experience are of the highest standard.

**Impacting education:** We promote and recognise the vocational skills gained through participation in rugby, such as leadership, communication and teamwork. ACRT uses rugby as the vehicle to run educational programs to support communities and participants, tackle the challenges of modern society and the ever-changing environment.

**Supporting recruitment, transition and retention of young players within the sport of rugby:** We develop robust pathways for players, coaches and volunteers, ensuring that the appropriate levels of support are provided throughout. We provide support, training and resources to develop confidence in young players at key transitional points.

The ACRT Community Programme is funded by our partners, The Scottish Rugby Union and South Ayrshire Council (which together fund about 50% of the Programme) together with funds raised at ACRT's Long Lunch, which funds the balance.





The Programme is dependent on this funding, and we would like to thank the SRU, South Ayrshire Council and all those who support the Long Lunch each May. Our SRU funding has been confirmed for a further three years. This will enable ACRT to continue to fund the Programme led by our Development Officer Frazier Climo and his team. On a pure numbers basis, the 2024/25 Programme has been our most productive yet. Details are set out below.

## School Rugby

Through our coaching team we delivered more than 1300 coaching sessions in primary and secondary schools over the course of the year. A sizeable number of the players who took part in those sessions went on to join Ayr Rugby Club and we saw growth in the number of youth girls playing at Ayr Rugby Club. Further details are as follows: -

### Belmont Academy – School of Rugby

Participation has increased year on year following the introduction of the School of Rugby and 2024/25 was no different.

S1 pupils - 35

S2 pupils -25

S3 pupils - 20

The Belmont Academy SOR has been a massive success. In S1 – S2 each player received 3 sessions per week plus monthly modules including nutrition, mental health & wellbeing, and online safety. Pupils in S3 received these modules plus a double period of rugby and strength and conditioning once a week. Belmont also complete against other local secondary schools in the Ayr Schools Cup.

One of the biggest positives from the programme has been to see the opportunities and confidence it has given both male and female pupils who are new to the sport or who may have had limited opportunities to be involved in rugby and seeing those young players transitioning to Ayr RFC youth teams and becoming Ayr RFC members. ACRT also paid for new playing strips for all pupils representing Belmont Academy.

**Ayr Academy:** ACRT delivered 4-week rugby blocks to S1 and S2 twice a week. Each session has 20-25 pupils from each class. Ayr Academy pupils also compete in local rugby festivals.

**Kyle Academy:** ACRT delivered sessions to 80 boys in S1 who received a 6-week block of contact rugby. This as followed up by monthly secondary contact festivals between local schools for the Ayr Schools Cup. ACRT also delivered additional after school rugby for Kyle Academy. Springtime will see a 6-week block of girls' rugby delivered with a number of festivals against other schools in Ayr.

**Queen Margaret Academy:** We delivered a block to all S1 and S2s girls at the school and have started up an after-school club for girls wanting contact rugby. We will also be delivering S3 leadership training over the coming months.

**Prestwick Academy:** ACRT delivered a 4-week block to all S1 & S2 pupils of contact / non-contact rugby. A total of 150 pupils.





## Primary School Rugby

A key focus was once again to target certain primary schools as Schools of Rugby as we have concluded that early participation in rugby is key to retaining players going forward. ACRT delivered sessions to the following schools

Forehill Primary – Full classes P6/7

Coylton Primary – 20 boys / 15 girls

Doonfoot Primary – Full classes P6/7

Alloway Primary – Full classes boys/girls P5/6/7

Ayr Grammer Primary – Full classes boys/girls P5/6/7

Tarbolton Primary - Full classes P5/6/7

ACRT has put together a new rugby programme targeting the transition of players (particularly girls) from schools to club rugby from the primary 6/7 age group. Schools welcomed the opportunity to be involved with this new programme. Coaches deliver one session per week to boys and girls throughout the year. Numbers have been hugely positive once again with some schools adding primary 5 pupils to the Programme.

For primary schools not involved in the SOR programme we will continue to deliver 4-week rugby blocks to each school (full classes) as often as we can. We currently deliver this model to 15 primary schools in South Ayrshire and that number will continue to grow in the coming months.

## Walking Rugby

The trust continues to deliver Walking Rugby sessions to an older generation at Millbrae. As well as encouraging activity among those who find it a challenge to get involved in sport, it also provides a social hub for individuals to enjoy conversation over coffee and bacon roll.





## Macdonald Legacy & Development

On Thursday the 6th of February 2025, Millbrae was transformed into a sea of supporters, cyclists and well-wishers. Nearly 600 people gathered for the official opening of Ayr Rugby Club's new access road and all-weather pitch, marking the completion of Phases 1 and 2 of a redevelopment project three years in the making. Local dignitaries, community groups, charity partners, sponsors, members and the press were all in attendance to witness a landmark moment in the club's history.

The ribbon-cutting was led by Alan Macdonald and former British & Irish Lion and Scotland captain Rob Wainwright who had diverted his army of Doddie Aid cyclists to Millbrae especially for the occasion. Moments later, the atmosphere lifted further as the cyclists set off from Millbrae on their journey to Greenock, making the first to use the new road. The event could not have asked for better conditions, the sun broke through the clouds and the crowd burst into applause as the cyclists raced away, carrying forward their fundraising mission in memory of the late Doddie Weir.

The redeveloped facilities were the result of three years of detailed preparation, an exceptional project team and highly capable contractors. Phases 1 and 2 were completed ahead of schedule in just over 10 months, a remarkable achievement! With the new all-weather pitch now operational, the majority of Ayr Rugby Club's teams have returned to training at Millbrae. The ground has become a hive of activity, demonstrating the direct benefit of modern facilities on club culture and development. The opening of Phases 1 and 2 marks more than infrastructure—it represents momentum, community unity and the promise of a stronger, more accessible Millbrae. Ayr Rugby Club's redevelopment is not slowing down. Instead, it is accelerating toward the next phase which starts in early 2026.







## 3G Pitch Activity

Our 3G pitch has been a welcome addition to Millbrae for a variety of reasons.

Primarily it has reunited our club meaning all teams are at Millbrae at least once per week and in doing so has removed our requirement to rent other pitches. It has also meant that we have been able to rest the 1st XV pitch a lot more which will stand us in good stead through the winter months.

While we use the pitch a lot for our own use we have also seen a steady uptake in bookings from local football teams. We have welcomed boys and girls games and tournaments along with some junior and amateur football teams. To enhance our facility for these bookings we have enabled the clubhouse lobby to be used at all times - allowing access to the vending machines and toilets, with the doors into the bar and function room locked for our security.

This increased footfall is very welcome for sponsorship with the 3G pitch starting to get more boards around the outside - the market using that pitch is different to the higher profile 1st XV pitch.

The feedback from teams renting the facility for games or training has been very positive with majority becoming regular bookings. Some of the teams have also been using the bar and function room for post match when available providing additional revenue streams.

The pitch has attracted a much wider audience to Millbrae than we have ever had.





# Memberships

Our membership remains strong across the club and using Fanbase as a platform has helped with annual retention and minimising administrative burden.

To clarify how the process works - you buy your relevant membership on Fanbase and set up to pay annually or monthly. Once we see this purchase we then set your status to 'priority' (allowing access to things like international tickets), and then manually issue a season ticket which allows access to the games.

For Life members there is no purchase as such, but we still send season tickets to match that status. The same applies for sponsored players.

For all under 18 members we do not issue season tickets as they do not require them to access 1st XV games.

Our current membership categories are as follows:

Life - 60	Family Memberships - 37	Youth players - 138
Honorary Life - 6	Spouse - 21	Senior players - 47 + 50 sponsored players
Adult Ordinary - 80	Country - 16	
Accredited Junior Coaches - 33	Mini players - 97	







## Club Shop

At last years AGM we announced plans to change the operation of our shop to better fit the resources we had available. This involved reduced opening of our physical shop, more emphasis on click and collect along with a better offering of our products on the O'Neills website.

One of the main objectives was to reduce the amount of stock in order for it to be easier to be run by our volunteers on match days. We recognise however that our members/supporters are still physical shoppers and like to see things before they buy, therefore we are in the final stages of having a very clear offering of on field and off field products held in our shop as well as a larger range on O'Neills site.

Our core products will be as follows;

On field - Socks/Sleeves, shorts, t-shirts, youth playing strips, wind cheaters, and joggers.

Off field - hats, polos, 1/4 zips, hoodies, umbrellas, ties, and sliders.

These will be the core products in the shop and held in the most common sizes. We will not carry higher value items like jackets, due to cost and space required.

Our discounts throughout the year minimised the loss we were facing from redundant Bulls stock as well as the recent Ayr/Wellington kit changes - the significant write off we feared has fortunately not materialised.

We are very grateful to our volunteers who staff the shop on matchdays when demand is at its peak - without their help it would not be possible to operate it.





## Volunteering

Ayr RFC continues to pride itself on being more than just a rugby club – we are an active part of the wider community. Rugby is at the heart of Millbrae, from Minis through to Youth, Senior rugby, Walking Rugby, and community events, we rely heavily on the dedication of our Volunteers.

Our volunteer community supports every aspect of club life and underpins everything we do at both Millbrae and Dam Park – from coaching and managing rugby teams, to running the Club shop, stewarding the gates and car park on match days, taking photos, recording matches, and helping at events such as Fireworks Night and Beach Rugby. During last season alone our Volunteers contributed over 15000 hours which averages more than five hours each week over a 40-week rugby “year.” Collectively, this represents a remarkable commitment!

This year the club has taken further steps to strengthen and better recognise the role of volunteers. A Volunteers Working Group (building on the Rugby Forum) has been created to coordinate support, ensure contributions are valued, and spread the workload more evenly. The response so far has been very positive, with many members old and new coming forward to offer their skills and enthusiasm.

We are also delighted to be in advanced discussions with a sponsor who is keen to support and celebrate our volunteers on a monthly basis, adding to the club’s own commitment to recognising the contribution made by the Volunteers.

On behalf of everyone at Ayr RFC, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to every single Volunteer for your time, energy, and commitment. You are the lifeblood of the club, and together our Club will continue to grow, thrive, and play a positive role in our community both on and off the pitch.







## Club Mission

“AYR RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB is an inclusive rugby club at the heart and centre of the community.”



## Club Objectives

1. To advance public participation in sport, particularly the sport of Rugby Union Football, so as to promote and advance the health and well-being of a wide and diverse range of participants.
2. To provide, develop, manage and promote sporting, recreational and social activities to the public generally.
3. To provide education, coaching and training in relation to sport, particularly the sport of Rugby Union Football, fitness and related skills to broaden the development of individual sporting talents and capabilities of children, youths and adults.
4. To promote a diverse and inclusive environment for participation in sport, recreation and social activities, particularly those associated with the sport of Rugby Union Football.
5. To work with those involved in sport, particularly the sport of Rugby Union Football, in relation to all or any of the objectives set out in article 4.





