

Amnesty to reinstate missed years of membership – FINAL REMINDER

THE Board made an offer in August to all Societies to consider the position of, typically, their Life members for whom, inadvertently, no national subscriptions might have been paid in recent years. The mistake is sometimes made that members honoured locally have the same status as our national Life Members. It is only the latter who are exempt from subscriptions.

The amnesty to recover missed years at a heavily discounted fee expires on 31 October. For a nominal fee any of our long-serving members can recover their full service so they are not disqualified from national awards. If there are any outstanding cases to be claimed for, please email us immediately.

Contact Karen in the office on: karen@footballreferee.org.uk to obtain the necessary application form.

Constitutional Review

The team has been working hard on this and substantial proposals will be ready to be put before the 2014 AGM. One of the key areas being addressed is the detail on how best to fully integrate new Centrally Recruited Members into the fold. It is essential that the part that our local societies can play in this is fully recognised and that there is a fully workable system for achieving this.

It is still not too late to make any views you have on the current Constitution known to the team. We have had some contributions that have had a full consideration, some in complete opposition to one another. All contributions are welcome so, if you do have something to propose, please contact the co-ordinator, Len Randall on len@lenrandall.co.uk

86 and still going strong

Harry Hardy [Erewash Valley] continues refereeing Sunday football at the venerable age of 86 and is thought to be England's oldest active referee. He is a Life Member of the RA and has been in membership now for 55 years. Do the arithmetic and see that he was a late starter!

His dedication has further been recognised by the FA when he was honoured by the President, Prince William, at the recent Buckingham Palace festivities celebrating their 150th Anniversary.

FA Consultation

The FA has been consulting its County FAs for their thoughts on two possible innovations:

- The introduction of a small fee charged to County Promotion Candidates each year that would be refunded if they complete the full set of formalities even if they are not promoted. As in basic training, there is an enormous 'wastage' where candidates start but never complete the promotion trail resulting in unnecessary administrative costs, not the least wasted assessors' fees.
- The possibility of relaxing the regulations of referees' kit – allowing the officials to wear 'coloured' shirts and, in turn we presume, allowing teams to play in black or dark-coloured kit.

Responses on this were sought by David Crick via County RA secretaries by 24 October. You might just have time to get your views registered.

The state of the game

We always welcome views from members. On a subject close to all our hearts, Jim Bailey – a member of Bootle Referees' Club with 36 years' service – writes commenting on the deterioration of the game. We quote his final paragraph:

Players never believe they have committed a foul, given a penalty away, or it should have been their goal kick not a corner. The aggressive manner in which they challenge the Referee or Assistant is absolutely disgraceful, and yet we see no signs of it getting better, in fact it is getting worse. With the television cameras getting a view of pretty much every angle, the behaviour of managers, players and coaches is in the spotlight more than ever, and you don't have to have a degree in lip-reading to understand exactly what has been said. To come back to the topic of this short piece, WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE, I really don't know, what I do know is what we have now is clearly NOT ACCEPTABLE.

Assaults – the aftermath

Members are reminded that, having done their duty and reported events to the appropriate authorities – the FA, the County FA and sometimes the Police, although we may be the victim, in effect we become effectively a witness to events being investigated. Importantly, the RA's rôle is supporting our members who become victims must be limited to that of moral support and counselling on the correct procedures to be followed. Please remember that, as in all other cases, the RA, County RAs and Societies cannot have access to a referee's disciplinary report. That is confidential to the 'authorities'.

The 2014 Election approaches

At the end of the month nomination papers will be distributed seeking candidates to fill the three Board seats that fall vacant next July. We know there are many members who have the right skills and experience to make a real contribution to advancing the RA for the benefit of all. While the RA is a membership organisation, it is a business and needs members particularly with relevant business experience and some time to apply it for the improvements we know are required.

Please, if you have something to contribute, come forward. Advice can be given by any current or former Board member on what is entailed.

Unregistered football

From time to time both we and the 'football authorities' advise our members of the risks in participating in matches that are not recognised by the FA or the County FAs. Without going into details as it is *sub judice*, we have a significant dispute in progress with threats of legal action against a local society because it had advised its members not to officiate in a local league that was operating outside the jurisdiction of the County FA. The RA must, in principle, support that Society's guidance and it is only guidance.

Many of you will be aware of such leagues operating around the country. Many of you will also know that they are often professionally managed and that games are played with good facilities and in a good spirit. Many of you will also know that the rewards to referees are often financially very generous – hence the temptation!

Officialdom has consistently advised registered referees not to take part for the simple reason that the protective embrace regarding player discipline, referees' insurance etc., cannot operate. Simply put, referees are completely on their own.

Plea from a member

At the RA Conference in 2012 a video named "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" was run. It was the story of how to, and how not to, approach a match from a referee's perspective. The film was made by the FA and was extremely useful and entertaining. Is it possible to somehow get a copy of this video to show at our local RA event?

Dean Chilton-Davies of Dudley RA makes this appeal to us. Surely somebody, somewhere has a copy on disk or on their computer??? If you can help Dean, please email him: d.a.davies.1@bham.ac.uk

Greetings from the Antipodes

Those of us who are more mature may have met two friends from New Zealand who have visited England from time-to-time. Alan Boniface and Les Coffman wrote recently announcing they are retiring from Inspecting/coaching/Assessing, after a combined total of 117 years.

They both received RA 50-year Awards as long-standing Overseas Members a few years ago having followed very similar paths. Les joined in 1953 whilst in the RAF, and Alan joined in 1956, also whilst in the RAF in Cyprus. They both eventually emigrated to New Zealand and joined Auckland Referees' Association, both serving as President; Alan was also Secretary for 10 years. Les became a FIFA Referee, and Alan refereed on the National League for 10 years. On retiring from active refereeing both became Assessors/Coaches. Alan retired from this office in 2012, and Les retired this year. They are not lost to football as both intend to carry on Mentoring new/young referees and helping in any way possible.

The RA must widen its influence and embrace

British Universities and College Sport [BUCS] is in partnership with the Referees' Association and the RAFA Youth Council with the aim of supporting student referees who wish to continue to develop their referee skills whilst studying at university. To help support the transition of existing referees into Higher Education and to support the growth of student referees across the sector BUCS and the RAFA YC are developing University Referee Hubs. A BUCS University Referee Hub involves the development of a scholarship scheme to support the recruitment, training and deployment of student referees with the desire and commitment to impact upon the game internally (University Football) or Externally (Community Football).

There are already nine centres operating around the country. If your college or you personally want to get involved:

Contact Oliver Selfe by email for more information: oliver.selfe@bucs.org.uk