**Annual Report to Members**

Dear Members, 18 October 2021

What a strange year it has been since my last report in October 2020. Back then we were hoping that the end of the summer lockdown heralded the start of the recovery – how wrong we were. Two more lockdowns followed, and we didn’t get back to full operations until April this year – a full 8 months of further impact to add to the turmoil of spring/summer 2020.

**Gymnastics Activity**

It is not too much of an exaggeration to say that we have had to reset ourselves and have gone back at least a couple of years in the first 8 months of this Academy year (September 2020- April 2021). But at least we still have a club, thanks to the loyalty of our members who have stuck with us throughout, and our dedicated coaches who again had to use every ounce of imagination and determination to keep everyone busy and occupied during the lockdowns. Sadly, across the sport generally in the UK, not every club can say this, and we know of some who came out of it far worse than we did, and others that have folded, and our thoughts are with their gymnasts, coaches and volunteers.

As for the most recent 4 months of the Academy year up to August, the gymnastics theme was very much “back to basics” after so much disruption – rebuilding the strong foundations that served us well in our first two years pre-pandemic, and trusting that we have a great club with great people and we will get back to where we should be.

This was illustrated perfectly by our ability to welcome lots of new members. Our membership increased by about 25% from April to July and another 20% from July to August, and we are very pleased to welcome all of our new joiners and hope you have settled well.

We are now in the thick of a renewed competition scene, and we have already qualified one partnership to compete at national finals in November – we wish Gemma and Lexi the very best of luck!

**Investing in Seaton Mews**

The reason we were able to welcome so many new joiners – some of whom had been waiting patiently for some time – was because we took possession of Unit 2 Seaton Mews in April, allowing us to run two different halls simultaneously and thereby serve a greater number of people and different activities.

It had always been in our long-term strategy to expand into Unit 2 when able. However, because it was under a long-term tenant we did not know when that would be possible, and we knew we would need to save a significant sum of money to bring it to reality. For these reasons we had anticipated expanding not before 2025/26.

To our surprise, the landlord announced in January that the previous tenant would be out by March, and asked if we wanted to take it over. This was far earlier than either he or we had expected, but with his support and a significant investment from British Gymnastics, as well as our own savings, we took the plunge and in April we were able to open our second gym hall. Unit 2 brings a host of new opportunities, and we look forward to developing the Academy over the coming years to maximise that potential – for example two events are now possible that were not before. In December we will host our own Christmas Show instead of paying another venue for that; and in April we will host our first ever competition; and I’m sure there will be other highlights to follow.

You will have noticed that the Friends of Spirit have expended a significant effort refurbishing the reception area, and I think you will agree it’s now outstanding and a great addition to the Academy. This prompts me to make an unashamed plug for more support for the Friends of Spirit please – they are a group of parents who run fundraising on behalf of everyone – by the members, for the members. As we have grown significantly over the last year, I am sure there must be a few parents who would be willing to give up a bit of time to join the gang and make a difference for everyone. If you would like to know more about the Friends, who they are and what they do, look out for some open evenings coming up between the AGM and Christmas.

**Our Finances**

We have been fortunate to receive consistent support from our members, and from the landlord, British Gymnastics, South Somerset District Council and the Government. As a result, we go into our fourth year of operations in a sound financial position, but with some significant commitments that will remain with us for several years to come. We are by no means “home and dry”, but we are running on a sound basis with clear objectives and active, energetic leadership.

The Finance Director can expand on this topic during the AGM, but you can be assured that we remain faithful to the principles of a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, and a Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC).

**Long term plans**

Our long-term strategy was turned on its head somewhat, when we moved into Unit 2 far sooner than expected. So our priority is to grow into the space we now have available, and stabilise everything after an extraordinary, once-in-a-lifetime experience during the pandemic.

Finally, as if to emphasise that we must be doing something right, during this Academy year we have received two awards. In December last year, our Head Coach Amy Moulton was named UK Young Coach of the Year, with Issy Haigh also a runner-up. And just a few weeks ago, we were named the Yeovil Young Business of the Year in the Chamber of Commerce annual awards. So I am confident that you are in good hands. If anyone wishes to discuss our plans in detail, do not hesitate to contact me, or ask during the AGM.

**Summary**

Who knows what the winter will bring – as I write, there is talk of going into the Government’s Plan B measures, which could impact us all over again. If this happens, we will pull together and get through like we did last time, and I know I can count on your support.

Thank you all for your contributions, whether large or small, paid or voluntary, doing the sport or doing the admin. We could not succeed without Team Spirit.

Yours

Al Haigh

Managing Director