As I sat down to pen this, my first, Chairman’s report I wondered what I should be covering. Browsing the archive of newsletters, news items, social media posts and emails, I was struck by quite how much different activity there is in a club of this size. There is no way a brief AGM report can do justice to them all so please forgive me if I restrict myself to a small number of significant events, activities and achievements.

The first event of the year, and probably the most prominent, was the Guinness World Record attempt at the start of July. Despite some understandable concerns about the amount of work required to stage this event, let alone the stamina required of the players, a huge number of people stepped up to the plate, both on and off the pitch, to smash the previous record and set a new time of 56 hours, 18 minutes and 45 seconds. We are now world record holders for the longest hockey match! Furthermore, the event raised a staggering £11,113 for the hockey club and £3,496 for Farleigh Hospice, as well as raising the profile of the club through media exposure. Well done to all who played a part in that weekend. The achievement appears to have kindled a desire for further recognition amongst some, with another world record attempt scheduled for 2 September. Less physically demanding, the challenge for this attempt is persuading at least two hundred and fifty players to participate, so please sign up now!

Early in the season we saw the launch of the club’s new web site, with a more modern look and feel to it, as well as a more user-friendly interface for those who maintain the content. Work has already started on the next step, which is an electronic payments system for collection of subscriptions and membership details.

On the pitch we managed to field eight men’s teams and seven women’s teams on a regular basis, a mixed team on Sundays and junior teams at all levels from Under-10 to Under-18. Results were inevitably mixed but there were promotions for the men’s 5th and 6th XIs as well as the women’s 6th XI. On the junior side the Under-16 and Under-18 girls reached the regional finals of the EH Championship and the quarter-finals of the EH Cup respectively.

The junior section continues to go from strength to strength. Membership numbers increased again this year, in part due to the “Rio” effect, but also because of the success of our various links with local schools and our reputation for providing a fun, safe and well-run environment for competitive sport. In April we also celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the first CHC junior tour to Zevenbergen, with our hosts making this year’s biennial trip to the Netherlands a very special occasion for us all. Tour rules prevent me from divulging any more.

The most important initiative this season has been the pitch replacement project. Two weeks ago the contracts were signed and work has now commenced. By the start of the new season we should have two new surfaces in place. We are indebted to Spencer Wilcox and Robert Nourse for their expertise and hard work over the past eighteen months or so in getting us to this stage and I would like to formally record my thanks to them both.

While the pitch replacement is going ahead, fundraising is still very much at the top of our agenda and I urge you all to please do what you can to help fund this pitch. Donations and covenants are always welcome but please also think about potential sponsorship leads and fundraising events that you could help with.

Various social events have taken place this season, including the Whisky Tasting and Christmas Party. Both the men’s dinner and Ladies’ Night were extremely popular, with almost two hundred members in attendance. The final event of the season in May, the Ball at Stock Brook Manor, was also a hugely enjoyable occasion and another excellent fundraiser for both CHC and Georgia’s Teenage Cancer Appeal.

Nothing that happens in this club could happen without volunteers. Perhaps the biggest challenge facing us at the moment is convincing members that they all have to do their bit for the club. It’s certainly not a new problem but the broad range of activities and initiatives provided by our club these days means we are feeling it more acutely now, and so too are those individuals who are trying to keep everything going. Simply put, there are too few people doing too much. What we need is more people doing less! Please think about how **you** can help keep **your** club running. Even if you can’t spare many hours there are always things that need doing. Also try to encourage others to take on a role. If we can’t find the volunteers then it means things don’t get done or the cost of our hockey rises, both of which will be to the detriment of all members and the long-term health of our club.

As always, a number of volunteers have decided, for different reasons, that it is time to move on. We are grateful to you all for your time and commitment but I would like to single out three for their individual contributions to club affairs over a number of years. Club President, Nigel King, is literally sailing off into the sunset; Treasurer, Chris Randall, has already relocated to Yorkshire; and Development Officer, Sally Dalton, has a new job that means she has to reduce her hockey commitments without leaving us entirely. You will all be missed but I wish you well in your future endeavours.

Finally, my personal thanks to the Management Committee members and to the Chelmer Park ground staff - Martin, Shane and Alan - who, as well as discharging their statutory duties, are always willing to help. We do appreciate your efforts.

David Kitchiner, June 2017