



CHELMSFORD HOCKEY CLUB

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2019

Try to use your imagination...

You arrive at Chelmer Park for your match. The pitch gates are unlocked by the club's resident facilities manager, who repositions the goals, arranges corner flags and collects litter in preparation for your game. Your professional coach delivers your pre-match team talk and you take to the pitch for the game, expertly umpired by two paid officials. Unfortunately, there is an injury to one of the players during the game but the St. John's Ambulance first aiders present at every home match deal with it swiftly and efficiently.

After an enjoyable match you walk back to the buildings to change, while the facilities manager clears the debris from around the team benches and locks the pitch. The facilities manager opened up the changing rooms earlier in the day, switched on the hot water and posted the room allocations so you know where to go for your refreshingly hot shower before you enter the clubhouse to be greeted, with a cheery smile, by our paid bar steward. Despite the warm welcome, you don't like to socialise after the game so you wolf down your bacon bap, prepared by our external caterers, and head home, as do the majority of your team-mates, to await selection notification for the following week's match from the club's full-time administrator.

Fantasy? Preposterous work of fiction? Perhaps, but I'm guessing that most of you get the point. After all, you've turned up to the AGM (unless you're reading this from the website) so I'm probably preaching to the converted.

The challenge facing us all is that most of the work that needs to be done to run a club of this size is performed by a tiny minority of our members, who are being asked to do more and more each year, while the vast majority of members seem content to avail themselves of the services provided by the club without contributing their time, participating in social activities or, it seems, paying materially more for the privilege! Furthermore, we have seen a marked reduction, throughout the club, in the commitment of members to play regularly, a trend that is reflected both locally and nationally according to recent participation figures provided by England Hockey.

How we address these issues is crucial to the long-term well-being of our club and it falls upon every member to do what little they can to assist. After all, it's your club and it only exists for the benefit of its members.

For their part, your management committee have invested financially in the coaching of both our 1st XIs in an attempt to elevate their league positions, a strategy that has succeeded for the women's 1st XI but so far failed with the men. The hope is that the health of these squads and the opportunity of higher-level hockey improves the performances of all teams, increases membership throughout the senior and junior sections and generates additional sponsorship revenue through increased media exposure.

The investment in the new membership database and on-line registration system, not to forget Peter Carter's vision and verve driving it forward, has coincided with increased subscription revenue, and our reinvigorated schools programme, led by Sally Dalton, has seen increased junior section membership and greater participation in local schools.

We must maintain momentum on existing initiatives but we also intend to make a big effort next season on the social front. More social activities generate revenue and help create a more socially inclusive club atmosphere that encourages people to stay longer at the club and feel they belong to the club and more willing to help run it.

What can you do to help? Volunteer for something. Help out when asked. Encourage others to participate in events and play an active role within the club. Identify prospective volunteers and inform a member of the committee. There are many things that you can do. Please just be aware of the challenges facing us and seize the opportunity to help tackle the challenges.

The alternative doesn't bear thinking about. We simply can't afford to pay people to perform all the key roles. Hockey is an expensive sport to play. The facilities are expensive to build, run and hire. Kit is expensive to buy. There is no getting away from the fact that it is always going to be a more expensive sport



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to play than most other team games. That said, it can also be a more welcoming and enjoyable sport to play in an all-inclusive club with fantastic sporting and social facilities. However, there is only so much that people are prepared to pay for that leisure experience.

That's the end of the sermon. Now to highlight a few other points worthy of mention...

On the field of play the L1 bounced back into the EHL at the first time of asking while the M7 were our only league champions this season. Hearty congratulations to both squads. I am sure you will both rise to the fresh challenges awaiting you next season.

After the M5 finished below the M6 last season, it was their turn to finish above the M4 this season. While a points deduction for the M4 for an administrative error earlier in the season played a key part in this, the M5's victory in the match between the two sides on the final day of the season merely served to confirm long-held suspicions that team selection throughout the club was not working as effectively as it could. Kath MacDonald is already putting plans in place to address this for the forthcoming season.

Off the pitch a few social events have taken place this season, including the Whisky Tasting and a hugely successful Beer Festival. Both the men's dinner and Ladies' Night were also extremely popular. Well done to all the organisers and attendees!

This year has seen the sad loss of VP and Evergreen stalwart, David "Coughdrop" Young. David was popular with everyone who knew him, teammates and opponents alike, for competitive but sporting play and a keen sense of humour. Please forgive the indulgence, but David also held a special place in my affections as one of the three co-managers of the first Chelmsford U19 team in which I played many years ago. I wonder if anyone can guess the identity of his two colleagues?

The sudden, mid-season passing of U10B Manager, David Flannagan, and the tragic news of Grace Millane, sister of Mike and Declan, murdered while enjoying a gap year in New Zealand, touched many within the club, even those who didn't know them personally. Our thoughts are with the families and friends of all three.

While I am delighted to welcome Darren Davies to the management committee as the new club Secretary, a post that has remained unfilled for far too long, it is with regret that we say thank you and farewell to two long-standing members of the committee.

James McCann is stepping down from his roles as Club Captain and Selection Coordinator for the men but has expressed a desire to remain involved with the club as one of the Social organisers. Kath MacDonald is taking a break from her work within the Junior section and stepping down as Chair but will continue coaching while taking on fresh responsibilities managing our coaches and restructuring selection and playing matters. Thank you both. It's been a pleasure to work with you on the committee.

Finally, my personal thanks to all 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 2019