



CHELMSFORD HOCKEY CLUB

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2022

With the reduced threat of COVID-19 there was an air of optimism surrounding all our teams over the course of the summer as they looked forward to resuming "normal" hockey activities and the prospect of a full league programme. The nationwide restructuring of league hockey added to the sense of excitement.

Unfortunately, the season did not start well for us. A summer exodus of players from the Ladies' 1st/2nd XI squad caused us to withdraw our 2nd XI from the East League. This was not a decision that was taken lightly and was largely due to safety concerns regarding young players being forced to step up, but also due to the expected detrimental impact on the lower XIs which we feared could cause the loss of more members. Furthermore, the sudden and unexpected resignation of the Ladies 1st XI Coach caused additional turmoil. Although, a very young 1st XI struggled in the first half of the season, those that watched their games could see that there was a fighting spirit within the squad, and I'm delighted to report that a string of fine results after Christmas was rewarded with an eighth-place finish and another season of EHL hockey next year. Meanwhile, the 3rd, 4th and 5th XIs were all crowned Champions of their respective divisions to give some cause for optimism next season.

On the Men's side, the league restructuring does not appear to have caused us too many issues. The 1st XI recorded their highest league finish since their EHL days, while Sam Prebble's 4th XI were Champions of Division 4 South-east but can expect some sterner tests next season. The 6th XI were the only "casualties" of the league restructuring as their difficult season ended in relegation from Division 5 South-east, but not without a fight. Our veterans teams remain competitive in the London League and the O40 and O50 teams progressed to the semi-finals and final of their respective national knockout competitions.

For the record, our teams' final league positions were:

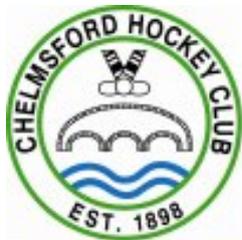
| Team | Men | Position | Women | Position |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1st XI | East League Premier Division | 3 rd | EHL East Conference Division | 8th |
| 2nd XI | East League Division 1 South | 9 th | East League Division 1 South | Withdrawn |
| 3rd XI | East League Division 2 South-east | 7 th | East League Division 2 South-east | 1 st – CHAMPIONS |
| 4th XI | East League Division 4 South-east | 1 st - CHAMPIONS | East League Division 3 South-east | 1 st – CHAMPIONS |
| 5th XI | East League Division 5 South-east | 4 th | East League Division 4 South-east | 1 st – CHAMPIONS |
| 6th XI | East League Division 5 South-east | 11 th - Relegated | East League Division 4 South-east | 4 th |
| 7th XI | East League Division 6 South-east | 7 th | East League Division 6 South-east | 8 th |
| 8th XI | n/a | | East League Division 6 South-east | 11 th |
| Vets | London O50 Premier | 8 th | n/a | |
| Evergreens | London O60 Premier | 7 th | n/a | |

Our Junior section continues to thrive. The full details are covered in Sally Dalton's Junior report but the key messages worth restating are that participation levels are extremely healthy. We have circa four hundred junior members, including an Under-8 group of just under one hundred, and we have taken the difficult decision at some age groups to create membership waiting lists due to overstretched resources.

The quality of our junior players is also high, with several players receiving regional and national recognition, and many regularly competing in our two 1st XIs. Aside from regular activities the junior holiday camps organised by Sally have proved popular with players and parents alike and are also generating significant revenue for the club.

As competitive hockey has returned, so have social activities. The beer festival, quiz night and men's and ladies' end-of-season events all proved popular, as did one or two impromptu socials throughout the season. Perhaps the most popular event was the spring mixed tournament organised by Sam Prebble. Played over several consecutive weekends, culminating in finals and play-off games on club day, this event, originally conceived as a post-Covid return to hockey, seems to have really captured our members' imagination. We hope it will remain an annual event.

On the facilities front, the departure of Tom Pegrum mid-season has caused a few stutters in one or two initiatives. While we remain indebted to Tom for his enthusiasm and endeavours, I think it also important to recognise the contributions of Darren Davies, Adrian Tuff, Dave Gore and Matt Gore in picking up much of the unfinished work on the tea hut, spectator seating and changing rooms. The names are all familiar because they



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already hold other roles within the club! We all know there is more to do, particularly the decoration of changing rooms five and six, but we are all incredibly proud of the new tea hut, or "pitchside café" as Tufty would prefer it to be known, and as the Treasurer's report shows, it has opened up an important new revenue stream for the club.

There has also been a lot of work on the Health and Safety side, with new fire and water (legionella management) risk assessments, the implementation of a number of regular fire, water, gas and electrical checks and remedial work on the fire alarm system to replace emergency lighting batteries and heat and smoke detectors.

Outside we continue to battle against local youths intent on breaking into the pitch enclosure. While we currently have no reason to believe their intentions are anything other than to play football on our pitch, we are understandably concerned about the potential for theft and damage to the pitch and other facilities. Anti-climb paint and warning signs installed at four perimeter points being used to gain entry appear to have been successful in deterring our agile opponents, but now their focus seems to have shifted to using brute force on rotten perimeter kickboards. Some temporary repairs have been made while we assess potential board replacement and identify a supplier.

For the second successive season I'm pleased to report that the majority of our volunteers are standing for re-election this season. You may recall from my report last year that I speculated that this could be attributable to the previous truncated season. However, I'm now wondering if it's simply an indication of more members wishing to take ownership of their club. If so, it's an extremely welcome change! Whether you are standing down, continuing for another season or taking on a new role, thank you to all our volunteers and well done for contributing to the running of our club.

I would also like to extend my personal thanks to all the Management Committee members and to the Chelmer Park ground staff - Martin, Shane, Alan and the new team member, Terry - who, as well as discharging their statutory duties, are always willing to help. We do appreciate your efforts.

There are still a number of vacancies next season. While all contribute to the smooth running of the club, there are four that are a priority to fill:

- Fixture Secretary
- Pitch Bookings
- Facilities Manager
- Club Umpire Secretary / Umpires Liaison Officer

We can provide more details on any of these roles. Please ask for further information if you think you could help.

Sadly, we lost one of the larger-than-life figures in our club last summer with the passing of vice-president, former player, coach, kit manager and newsletter editor, Dick Goode. "Goodey", as he was universally known, will be missed but fondly remembered by all who knew him, especially those who either toured with him or simply enjoyed his banter at the bar. There was a good turnout of past and present members of the club at Goodey's funeral and our thoughts are with his wife, Chris, son, Phil, and extended family.

Finally, it almost escaped our attention but some may have noticed that next season is our 125th year! We shall have to recognise this landmark with appropriate celebrations. If you have any ideas or would like to be involved in planning or organising events please contact one of the management committee.

David Kitchiner
June 2022