

JOURNAL

HAMPSTEAD & WESTMINSTER HOCKEY CLUB

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INTRODUCTION

(and apologies for a preliminary "Mission Statement")

This Newsletter is the first in what is hoped to be a reasonably regular attempt to spread the word of the fortunes of H&WHC, as it now is sometimes now referred to acronymically, given its somewhat lengthy name.

The Club has recognised that it has not succeeded recently in keeping its more senior friends and past members properly informed of the various events and happenings. A recently reconvened Strategy Committee has identified, amongst several pressing issues, the need to re-establish contact with this illustrious band and this edition is a first step in trying to put that to rights.

In undertaking the task the Club's Committee once again wants to record its thanks to Colin Greenhalgh for past efforts and, virtually single handedly, for his keeping at bay the frontiers of ignorance. This edition is written in the hope that it will in some way reflect the skill and sheer hard work which Colin put into establishing the "oldies network" which, as mentioned, the present Committee is eager to restore and hopefully expand.

SAM TAYLOR

For those who will not already be aware, the Club was devastated in January by news of the sudden and untimely death of one of its most popular and respected members and officials, Sam Taylor. A Club can ill afford to lose any valued member but in Sam's case, with his huge contribution in recent years as Match Secretary and latterly with the heavy burden of Men's 1st XI Manager and as National League Liaison Officer, there is left a gaping vacuum which the Club will be hard pressed to fill.

The news came totally unexpectedly and as a huge shock to all. There can have been few current members who will not have known him and his selfless hard work, coupled with his playing contribution latterly for the Veterans and (in the middle of a difficult patch, with the introduction of London League hockey and the competitive environment that this can generate) for the 7th XI, who picked up a few well earned points under Sam's guidance, skill and effort.

The Club was pleased to hear that Jenny was proud to see so many Club members at Sam's funeral and even more delighted that Jenny has agreed to attend the Club's Annual Dinner in April, when the Sam Taylor Cup is to be awarded in his memory. Jenny plans several events to raise funds for the British Heart Foundation and Club members are expected to respond by helping the cause.



ON THE PITCH

Things have been rather difficult for the Men's 1st XI in their second season in the National League Division 2. Hamstrung early on with the summer injury suffered by their Captain Andy Thompson, whose twisted knee was diagnosed as a cruciate ligament problem, causing him to miss the whole season and coupled with Dave Dixon's unavailability, the plethora of subsequent injuries to key players has led to a slide down the table from the 3rd place gained in early November after a heady away win against Edgbaston.

Currently the team is in the relegation area but with the prospect of playing off with the Regional League winners in order to stave off relegation proper. Kevin Gallen has returned from NZ to lead the team as coach and to add some experience to the side. The first point of the year was gained last week at Clifton College against Firebrands, followed by a narrow but deserved win at Paddington this weekend against Crostyx, giving much needed hope. Plagues of injuries are affecting other clubs, such as Richmond, and appear to be a common denominator for those close to the danger zone.

With two games to play, against Isca and Olton & West Warwick, both also struggling this year, it threatens to be a nail-biting finish. Olton appear doomed to automatic relegation but with Isca only one point ahead of us, the fixture against them becomes an infamous "six pointer" upon which our future in the League may depend.

By contrast, the Women's 1st XI has had marked success in their first season in the South League Division 1, one below the National League, with trips to the South coast and beyond. At the last count they were third but unfortunately with only an outside chance of bridging the points gap with those at the top and the opportunity to qualify for the "big time".

That points gap was last reported to be eight behind Dulwich, who are two points behind League leaders West Witney. Dulwich are the only team to have taken points off West Witney and H&WHC has yet to play West Witney, (twice!), being two of the six matches still to play. Thus, the Women could have an important bearing on the way in which the final League table is written. The team is aiming to finish in the top third of the final standings and to treat this year as a consolidatory season, with the intention of winning the League next year (and why not?) and thus gaining promotion to the National League.

In the London League, the Men's 2nd XI, who found the Premier Division hard work last year, has done well to hold its own against the junior teams of the National League Division One clubs. They have had good wins against Southgate, Oxford University, Richmond and Teddington and post-Christmas, in particular, collected three wins out of five. After last Saturday's nervous win against St Albans (4-0 up,

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then pulled back to 4-3 with 12 minutes to go) the team has amassed 23 points which hopefully will be sufficient to steer clear of possible relegation. As skipper Adrian Rogers says, "it's too good a League to drop out of".

The **Men's 3rd XI** has been troubled by a few administrative difficulties but has performed more than creditably on the pitch, having won 7, drawn 3 and lost 8. Highlights have been the "double" over Old Louts and the defeat of Surbiton. There is an outside chance of the play-offs, with a good seam of talent through the side, now placed joint sixth in the League.

The **Men's 4th XI** is also placed mid-table. Its speciality seems to be the draw, especially when it ought to be winning (axiomatically?). The start of the season was poor, with four straight losses but since mid-November, the team has not lost. Captain James Mawson would not claim that his side were the stuff of legend but it has benefited from strong performances from newcomer Chris Bell and from old-hand Adrian Dent, with "stormin' Norman" performances in defence from Jez Willy.

The **Men's 5th XI**, who were League winners last year, has suffered a slight set back this year (just ask the likes of the Leeds and Blackburns, they say). Currently they are lying fourth (or possibly fifth) in London League 5A and do have chance of reaching the play-offs. They enjoyed a good win over Surbiton and, more so, the thrashing of Tulse Hill by 8-0, with John Dakin scoring five of the goals.

The **Men's 6th XI** have equally found it tough this year, having managed last year to squeeze into the upper part of the earlier League and thus qualify for the London League 5B, which came as a mixed blessing. The standard of opposition has been high but they have upset the odds by beating St Albans - always a pleasure given the monopoly of success hitherto enjoyed by their two teams in the League. The team is presently mid-table, after a good win against Beckenham and an outrageously early Saturday draw against Hounslow (coming back from 0-3, with *not quite* a full compliment of players, to 3-3 by the end, much to the annoyance of the opposition!) Will Higgins is reasonably confident that they will avoid "the drop" especially now that they have a class goalie, just for a change!

The **Men's 7th XI** have enjoyed the exposure to London League 5C but found it tough going in the early days and, as mentioned previously, were greatly influenced by Sam Taylor's reassuring presence. His special contribution was the boost of confidence given to a generally inexperienced team (in League terms): so much so that since Christmas, only two matches have been lost. A good win against Southgate has been the highlight so far. The team has been ably led by Steve Cripwell and Pete Forster.

The **Veterans** are once again enthusiastically led by Chris Elliott, now thought to be in the tenth year as skipper and still holding his own. With a few of the older players being actively encouraged to join from the League teams, there has been a surfeit of players and like Bath RFC a rota system has been introduced: Chris hopes that what's good enough for the likes of Simon Geogeghan and Jon Sleightome is good enough for his lads! His absence on holiday as this edition goes to print means a lack of hard facts, which hopefully will offer some scope for a fuller report in the next edition.

Guy Mayers has once again managed the **Spaniard's XI** and secured a marked degree of success in difficult circumstances in introducing new players to the Club and at the same time giving the senior players a game. It was in 1991/2 that efforts were made to run two sides for the Vets, one being allocated the sobriquet "Supervets". As Guy points out, by 1995/6 the advancing years made the tag "super" increasingly inappropriate and it has proved difficult to fill the team with gentlemen "of a certain age". Thus, the team was re-named "Spaniards" which has enabled it to welcome younger legs to add zest and enjoyment for this, the first full year of fixtures.

For the rest of the Women's teams, the **2nd XI** are understood to be safe from relegation in their inaugural season in Middlesex Division 1. It has been a tough year in a tight League and a need to fight really hard for points and not helped by plenty of injuries. The lack of a regular coach has also been a disadvantage.

By comparison, the **3rd XI** is flying high, leaving all others in its wake as the team blazes its way to the top of Middlesex Division 3. All this, too, in what, again, is an inaugural season after last year's promotion. They probably have the best playing record in H&WHC at present and are enviously eyeing the Barnard Cup. They have developed the happy knack of winning by 4-0 or 5-0 scorelines: may it long continue and rub off on the others!

The **4th XI** is currently in second place in the Middlesex 5th Division, to which it was promoted last year. The team has adapted well to the new League and is proud only to have conceded one League goal against all season. It does not take a genius to see that promotion certainly seems to be the common theme of the Women's section and that a high degree of success has been quickly generated.

This year has also seen the inauguration of the **5th XI**, such has been the demand for more Women's hockey at the Club. There have been few problems securing a full quota of players. The team has played social fixtures, winning the majority and reportedly enjoying the experience, which makes the repetition of the experiment next year more than likely.

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THE CARLTON

1996 has seen the Club take up residence at the Carlton Tavern (33a Carlton Vale NW6 5EU; tel 0171 372 0822) at the kind invitation of Peter Boizot, who has expanded further into the leisure business with this his latest venture. The Club is again highly indebted to Peter, who has in a short space of time transformed the establishment, much to the surprise of some of its neighbours (including the doubting Thomas's of the Paddington Sports Club, where H&WHC was previously resident).

Peter has yet more plans for the Carlton and would be delighted to see any of the old members there if they happen to be in the neighbourhood. Some Hockey memorabilia has been collected, including *mirabile dictu* the old Club blackboard from the days of Hornsey.

EVENTS

The Annual Dinner and Dance is to be held this year at the London Zoo on 13th April, with a reception (probably in the Reptile House) followed by Dinner. The annual prize giving will also take place. The Club is now "armed" with several prize trophies, awarded to the leading player in each Section and the most promising player, coupled with the Most Valuable Player Award for each team, awarded on a cumulative basis, match by match, throughout the season and by the votes of team mates after each game - all highly democratic and egalitarian, don't you know! Tickets (priced £32 single and £60 double (and which includes a half bottle of wine)) are available from Wendy O'Toole of the Club: tel 0171 221 6590; or at work 0181 332 8528).

Wendy and Adelaide Macauley have both striven hard to establish a series of social events for the Club this year but are becoming increasingly disillusioned with the lack of a proper level of response from the general membership: perhaps it was ever thus? Hopefully, the Annual Dinner will be better supported: it is frustrating to learn only late last week that the HA has proposed holding the National League play-offs during the same weekend. If, therefore, the Men's 1st XI is involved, this is likely to disrupt the event somewhat, which heightens the need for active support.

MILTON KEYNES

Rumour has it that the Men's National League Play-Offs (rather euphemistically dubbed the "HA Inter League Tournament") will be held at the new National Stadium at Milton Keynes (at the junction of Silbury Boulevard and Grafton Gate, fairly close to the BR station) which was handed over to the HA in early February but awaits an official opening. A part of the proceeds of the Raffle conducted at the Centenary Dinner last year (which many of you will have supported) was donated to the Fund Raising and as a result, we are told that one square metre of the playing surface for each £25 raised has been somewhat mysteriously "allocated" to H&WHC.

YOUR NEWS

With Colin's help, the Club has put together a list of names and addresses of those to whom this newsletter has been circulated. A copy is enclosed and it would be helpful if those who know that any address may be wrong or who might know the whereabouts of others would let the Club know via Ian Smith (tel: 0171 739 9110 or at work 0181 906 5533/ fax 0181 906 5485) who will try to compile an updated list for enclosure with the next edition. There are evident gaps, for which information is being sought and if there are others who are known to you and who should be included on the List, please send details.

If any of you has any news which you would like to share with the Club then please send it in (again, via Ian Smith, as above): it would be more than welcome and might abbreviate the tedium of the more mundane news that the Committee felt should be circulated to you initially after this rather long hiatus.

HOCKEY DIGEST

Again, for the non-cognescenti, the Hockey Digest has a new look to it and has been transformed recently. A brief look inside the front cover may reveal why. There you will see that the new publisher is none other than P Boizot Esq and that the address for the magazine has a remarkable similarity with that of a certain Restaurant in Romilly Street.

So far as H&WHC is concerned, this month's edition has a small tribute to Sam Taylor, a reference to the "United Nations" allegedly comprising the Women's 1st XI and a few learned words from Nick Coleman regarding the due process of disciplinary hearings and how ill-prepared Hockey seems to be, with the possibility of action being taken by those who carry through the hearings and may not think that they could be susceptible to legal challenge.

Those perhaps used to a fairly sedate magazine will find it much changed and far more challenging, interesting and informative.

THE FUTURE

The Club is well aware of the challenges that both the immediate and longer term future holds for it. This, in part, explains the recent revival of the Strategy Sub-Committee that met at Kettners in mid January. It was the earlier Sub-Committee's work that paved the way, eventually, for the Men's 1st XI success in gaining promotion to the National League. It is easy to recall the degree of disbelief expressed by many when it was suggested, those five or so years earlier, that it was just this that the Club should be aiming for, when it seemed so illusory at the time.

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As the challenges increase, the Sub-Committee has recognised the number of issues to be tackled and which will be difficult to deal with. These include the future at Paddington and the possible improvement of the facilities, given the wear and tear now self-evident, re-establishment of a Youth/Colts Section and its integration with the Club, whether the Club needs a part-time (or even full-time) paid Administrator, Sponsorship (especially if the Women's 1st XI follows the Men's success and is promoted to the National League) and the vexed question of the funding of the Men's 1st XI itself.

NEXT EDITION

We hope in the next edition amongst things (and without having yet alerted him) to talk to Tony Elliott, now appointed as the Secretary to the Middlesex Hockey Umpires' Association to hear how life now treats him on the "other side" of the white line (or as Tony is all too appreciative, at Paddington, the *lack* of a white line) and, amongst others, to learn how the Umpires foresee the lack of offside may affect the game after the Atlanta Olympics.

AND FINALLY...

(and with apologies to Trevor McDonald)

As this edition has "spilt" on to a fourth page, the remainder is charitably donated to the reader, perhaps to record:-

1. This weekend's Stableford; or
2. Your winning lottery combination; or
3. This week's shopping list; or
4. Your selection of the England XI for the 1st Test against India; or
5. After sober reflection, your (completely different) selection for the 2nd Test; or
6. Your estimate of the final standings in the National League Division 2; or
7. Your draft message to the others on the Address List, for possible inclusion in the next issue?

OVER AND OUT!