

BSHC Chairman's Report 2019/20

On behalf of the management committee, it is my privilege to welcome members to an unusual format for our Annual General Meeting following a season that has proved to be exceptional in many ways. We typically hold our AGM in June each year, but the Committee took the view - as indeed many organisations have this year - to postpone to a point where both the practicalities were a little more manageable and we might have a little more insight around the coming season.

September 2019 saw the Management Committee - along with the wider Herts & Essex Sports Centre project team - on tenterhooks as to whether the new sports centre at Beldams Lane would be ready in time for both the official opening and the start of the league season. Notwithstanding some initial teething issues around hot water, parking and a couple of the viewing windows, things have come together well and the Club has settled in well to our new home.

The delay to the site did mean there was no opportunity for grand opening - and our inaugural President's Day at the end of the season fell foul of lockdown, but we were able to welcome Vice Presidents and Donors to a reception in October to see a lively day of hockey from the relative comfort of the bar. Whilst I am clearly biased, I think we now have a facility that exceeds all but a handful of clubs in the region and one that should provide a firm platform for our ambition on and off the pitch. Pre-Covid we had recognised the potential to make more of the fantastic viewing facility by having more later matches and this is still on the agenda as and when Covid guidance relaxes both in regard to hockey and socialising more generally.

In last year's report, I acknowledged the significant efforts of a wide group to the fundraising and wider project and this year I would reiterate my thanks to them all. Nonetheless, as we approach the anniversary of the sports centre being open, I would like to highlight the contribution once again of three of our Vice Presidents: Gary Griffiths for his instrumental role in the whole project and particularly brokering the partnership between Club and School; Pippa Bull in her ongoing capacity as Herts & Essex Governor and sports centre company director; and Gregg Pettit for his determination to make the sports centre operate effectively and incorporate our club's requirements along the way.

The Club also launched a new website: www.stortfordhockey.co.uk at the beginning of the season, with sterling leadership from Adam Farley to achieve the transfer in a relatively tight close season period. Not only is the website much better designed for viewing on tablets and phones than the previous version but there is also significant additional functionality which will help the club's administrators be much more efficient as we get to grips with the change. The move has also meant an overhaul of our membership database: in light of data protection regulations, we took the view that it was better to start afresh and ask members and supporters to reregister rather than simply migrate data. This had an impact on our membership numbers - down slightly from 583 to 569, but gives us confidence that we are moving forward with an

accurate database. Adam has also been at the heart of reenergising our social media accounts over the last year too.

The section leads will give the detail of the playing performances in their reports, but the phenomenal success of the ladies' section this year is worthy of a special mention not only for the individual team success (which was significant) but also their commitment to growing our sport, and promoting the importance of being an actively social club. The men have enjoyed a season largely of consolidation but with a direction of travel that is positive, particularly with the reintroduction of a sixth team after some years without. I'd like to extend a particular thanks to Duncan and Dicky T for their leadership of the Men's and Ladies' sections respectively as well as to Rachel Armitage in her role as Junior Coordinator. Whilst there's a range of volunteers across the whole of the club, the leadership of the three sections comes with a broad and varied set of responsibilities and are such key roles to the success of the club overall and we would not be in the position we are without them. Thank you!

Had things gone to plan, we would have had our awards night and celebration at the end of March and the Dinner Dance at the beginning of May to mark an incredibly successful year on the pitch. Even if it is disappointing to not have been able to celebrate in the way in which we are accustomed, it is important that we do celebrate the success of last season and some notable individual contributions even in a virtual forum and to that end, I look forward to the awards section of this evening that will follow our formal business. Without stealing the thunder of later, I would want to particularly highlight the contribution and service that David Earl has made to our sport over the last 63 years. From the early days playing for Cambridge Nomads and Harborne, to an association with BSHC since 1979, David has finally hung up his whistle although there will always be a glass of Shiraz for him at the bar.

Jamie Henderson has been a very strong treasurer for the club over the last 5 years, putting us on a stronger footing with our budgeting and understanding of our finances, introducing the gocardless payment system, steering a course through the complexity of CASC and gift aid regulations and more recently helping to inform our Covid response. He will give his final report to this meeting before standing down and on behalf of the whole club I thank him for his contribution. Whilst the end of last season arrived abruptly, from a medium-term perspective, the timing of lockdown was such that it has had the least impact for the club that we might have expected thus far. Although we haven't run the full programme of summer hockey that we would have expected, the impact of Covid-19 on club finances thus far has been much less significant than if it had fallen in the midst of the season. Jamie's report will include a summary of how we propose to deal with future restrictions to playing if they should arise. Simon Martyn also stands down from the committee after 8 years as sometime social secretary and latterly men's section representative and has been a strong advocate and voice for the membership in the management committee's meetings.

This report is also my final one as the Club Chairman after four short but eventful years. Whilst I'm no more likely than the wider membership to miss my annual cameo at the Chairman's Band

night, it has been an incredibly rewarding experience to be part of the leadership of such a great club. That has been made all the easier by the number of brilliant and inspiring people who are involved in giving something back in some way. It's easy to overlook sometimes that we are as a club run entirely by volunteers who get stuck in - whether its coaching, umpiring, transporting, club administration, or professional advice (not just clubroom opinion!) and everything in between.

On behalf of all of the membership - I'd like to thank everyone who makes a positive contribution in any form towards the running of the club – there are too many to mention you all (although as ever, we'd love a few more!).

Yours, in hockey,

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David Butcher
BSHC Club Chairman 2019/20