

Bishop's Stortford Hockey Club

(Affiliated to England Hockey and Hertfordshire County Hockey Association)

www.bshc.hitssports.com



Chairman's Report 2017/18

On behalf of the management committee, it is my privilege to welcome members to the 2018 Annual General Meeting and introduce reports from your committee members on the various aspect of club life and the 2017/18 season. Both on and off the pitch it has been a mixed season, a combination of some exhilarating highs and painful lows.

Overall, as the Club approaches our 70th Anniversary season, we are in good health. The England Hockey Affiliation process showed that we have 713 playing or affiliated members making us the 15th largest club in England by overall membership. Most notable has been the continued growth of the junior section which, through the leadership of Jemma Smith, has seen an increase in membership of nearly 250% and with nearly 400 current junior members, gives us the 28th largest u16 membership base in the country.

Caitlin Brown, Duncan Barber, and Jemma Smith as your club captains and junior manager will report on the detail of this year's campaigns, but I was particularly pleased to see the Ladies' 1st XI consolidate last year's promotion-winning campaign with a strong showing to finish comfortably in mid table, the Men's 5s went one better with back to back promotions, the successful introduction of the Ladies' 5th XI to Saturday hockey, and the tremendous achievement of the u16 Boys reaching the national finals. It was frustrating to see the Men's 1st XI relegated despite having amassed 3rd highest points total of a BSHC Men's 1st XI in the last 10 years and one that in all but two of the last fifteen seasons in Division 1 would have secured survival. I'd also like to congratulate those who played representative Masters hockey this year including Pippa Bull and Tim Smith for England, Ronnie Stott and Phil Mathison for Scotland, and Rich Markham for Wales.

Away from the pitch, it was an eventful year for the Stortford hockey family. The season was bookended by two notable hockey partnerships: a strong contingent from the club made the 650 mile roundtrip to the Scottish Borders to celebrate the marriage of Phil and Hollie Mathison in August whilst the sun shone on the Gregg Pettit and Jemma Smith wedding in Suffolk in May. However, the joy of those days was tempered by the sadness of losing two of our Vice Presidents: first Gordon Buchanan in August 2017, who had joined the club in the late 1970s and then Claire 'Thumper' Shillito in October after a short illness and some 31 years of active playing membership at BSHC. Both are sorely missed although the comfort that BSHC members continue to offer their families - and to one another - bring meaning to the sentiment of the 'hockey family' in tough times.

This time last year, we discussed at length the prospects for securing the playing facilities required to meet our future needs and the proposed development with Herts & Essex School at Beldams Lane and members overwhelmingly voted in



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support of pursuing that proposal. Much progress has been made over the last year: planning permission was secured at the end of September 2017 and construction of Phase 1 has begun. This will see the completion of the sports hall and associated facilities including the footprint that will become our clubroom. The timing of phase 2 - including the All-weather pitch - is now driven primarily by securing the funding required: for a hockey perspective, the project is seeking a contribution of £300k and we now need to accelerate our fundraising accordingly over the coming months. Having spent the last 25 years of our existence with our playing and social facilities fragmented, there is now the very real prospect of unifying the two in a viable project.

Beyond the challenge of such an ambitious project and raising the funds we need to achieve it, we as a club are fortunate to have a dedicated, talented, and enthusiastic core of volunteers. A recent inquiry report published by government highlighted that "there is no substitute for doing boring really well" and whilst there is the very real excitement of the major projects such as Beldams Lane, we cannot lose sight of our core purpose. Our vision remains to offer "quality structured hockey and coaching for all abilities, ages and genders... [and] grow the game of hockey and develop young and old players alike." If we are to achieve this, we need to focus on our daily and weekly activities: getting some 125+ players out each Saturday, coordinating 21 junior teams, securing coaches and umpires each week. At the same time, we need to continue to evolve our offer so that both our hockey and social offerings reflect what our members - and potential members - want and value.

As a club we are run entirely by volunteers and 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 really are too many to mention you all, but I did want to single out a few.

Those of you at the Dinner Dance will recall the following winners of Club Awards:

The Coaches' Player went to **Andy Cox** whilst the Coach of the Year award acknowledged the success of **Graham Brooks** in steering his u16 Boys through a successful campaign culminating in the national finals in April. After a successful first year in the pool, **Nick Slowe** was a worthy winner of the Cobb Cup – our umpires' award.

This year's Neil Vartan award went to **Colin Harker** who epitomises the varied contributions that can be made both on and off the pitch. Not only does Colin continue to be one of our stalwart umpires, annual co-quizmaster, and Chairman's Band mainstay on keyboards but he steps down from the role of Hon. Ground Secretary after 25 years of overseeing pitch bookings, managing teas, and ensuring the pitch is swept each week.



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We are committed to providing a social hub for our membership as well as hockey opportunities and this year's recipient of the James Kew award went to **Neall 'Tubby' Range** in recognition of his many and varied contributions to the club. Most notable though is the way that he - along with Sedge - has underpinned the BS Sports Trust trading company and through goodwill and hard work transformed the bar offering and atmosphere of the Charles Edward Pavilion into a space where we are proud to entertain our visiting teams.

Since joining BSHC through the Back to Hockey initiative, **Nick Budd** has shown himself to be a brilliant contributor, not only to the Men's section where he has fostered a great spirit of fellowship during his tenure as Men's 4s captain and as a Section Committee representative, but also more widely through umpiring, volunteering, and latterly as a bassist in the Chairman's Band. A worthy winner of this year's Chairman's Award.

Gregg Pettit will deliver his first report as one of the BSHC representatives on the Hockerill Sports Trust, having taken this on as part of his role leading our development work from **Gary Griffiths**. On behalf of BSHC, I'd like to acknowledge Gary for the contribution he has made to the establishment and successful running of the Hockerill arrangement over the last 25 years and thank him for all the work he is currently doing to achieve the Beldam's Lane project as both Herts & Essex Governor and BSHC Vice President. **Paula Frenzel** also steps down this year from her role as membership secretary (perhaps to the relief of those seeking to evade paying match fees) and **Caitlin Brown** hands over the reins of ladies' Club Captain with the section on the cusp of some really exciting developments.

After 7 incredibly successful years at the helm of the junior section, **Jemma Smith** is taking a step back from running the juniors. When Jemma joined BSHC in 2010/11, we had some 120 junior members. We finish 2017/18 with over 400 as a direct result of her incredible dedication. I've been especially impressed by Jemma's determination that as a club we should accommodate all those who want to play, maintaining this stance even as growing numbers have made this an increasing challenge to administer. We were delighted that last month, Jemma was on stage at the England Hockey Awards as one of the national finalists for the EH 'Unsung Hero of the Year' Award. Discussions are well advanced to engage with some external coaching expertise to help plug the gap that Jemma leaves behind.

As ever, there's always opportunities to get involved in the running of the club: not only the roles we'll nominate people for this evening, but a whole range of challenges great and small both on off the field. Please do talk to any one of the committee if you'd like to stick your hand up to get involved.

David Butcher
June 2018

