



## **Men's Club Captain's Report**

### **Review of Season**

A generally positive season marked with a considerable amount of success in the three lower teams but sadly this was more than offset by the relegation of the Men's First XII. There is a strongly unified culture in the Club. Attendance at things like training could always be improved but it has been good, particularly again from the lower teams, and the innovation of the Thursday evening open pitch session has proved tremendously successful with many reporting how much they enjoyed that opportunity.

### **First XII (W8 : D5 : L9)**

The First XII played some good hockey but did not manage to get enough wins and as a result they were relegated with 29 points in 9<sup>th</sup> place out of 12 with only a marginally losing record and with a positive goal difference. A frustrating season during which results did not quite match performances and performances could not be sustained to the very end of games. Several of the first team went travelling during the season which had an impact on playing strength but we did pick up Ben Bruce-Smith as a strong addition to the first team.

Player of the season: Ben Bruce-Smith

### **Second XII (W4 : D2 : L16)**

Under Simon Martyn for the last time, the Second XII again achieved a seemingly improbable third bottom to avoid relegation from Division 3 SW (only two sides being relegated from that division). Simon has worked very well with senior pros Will Simpson and Mark Taylor. They have enjoyed some success bringing in new players, both from outside the Club and from our very successful national finalist Under-16s. James Marsom provided some much-needed knowhow in the games that he played. The side had a habit until after Christmas of losing by the odd goal while playing well. After Christmas they managed several important wins to escape the bottom two. Matt Brown takes over the leadership next season.

Player of the Season: Mark Taylor

### **Third XII (W12 : D2 : L8)**

Led for the first time this season by wheeler-dealer Martin Gay, who always seems to have a player or two up his sleeve, the Threes boasted a record comparable with that of the more lauded Fourths and Fifths. They finished third in Division 5 SW but, as only two sides are promoted, they were "safe" from promotion. The Threes have exhibited a great mix of youth and experience with most players being either over 50 or under 16 with perhaps the best example being Fred Cooke and his under-14 son, Freddie Cooke who have contributed enormously to the side together. The side also boasted most of the male members of the Committee with the Club Chairman in goal.

Player of the Season: Adam Bassingthwaite



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## Fourth XII (W11 : D2 : L6)

Another success story led for the last season by Nick Budd. Another blend of youth and (perhaps even greater) experience. They fended off St Alban's Sevens to gain the third promotion slot in Division 7 SW. They also succeed at being more than the sum of their parts by playing some excellent team hockey. They will miss their leader who will hopefully be back to play some hockey in the ranks and who hands over to Stuart Paskins for next season. Nick has always maintained that the Fours are specialists in finding stars for the Club and the 2017/18 season was no different: Harry McKerrell, Phil Ramsay, Olly Thorp and Matt Dunn all found their way into higher teams during the season.

## Fifth XII (W11 : D4 : L5)

The Fifts enjoyed another great season achieving back-to-back promotions and thereby showing how consistent attendance at training and general enthusiasm for the task can reap rewards. They deservedly won Men's Team of the Season and were also short-listed for the England Hockey Team of the Season! They also benefitted from Sam Taylor's continuing desire to play fifth team hockey rather than higher up the club. Sam was the Club's top goal scorer again with 24 goals. The season also featured a smooth transition from Jon Jackson to James Nash as skipper. Like the Fours, the Fives will no doubt miss their long-term leader, but we wish Jon well on his return to his native Leeds.

Player of the Season:

## 2017/18 awards

Men's Indoor Player:	Duncan Laws
Men's Top Goal Scorer:	Sam Taylor
Men's Young Player	Freddie Cooke
Men's Most Improved:	Harry McKerrell
Men's Clubman:	Jon Jackson
Team of the Year:	Fifth XII

## Outlook for 2018/19

The main focus will be to achieve promotion for the First XII back to Division 1 (and from there, especially with changes to the league structure being brought in by England Hockey, to Premier B the following season). The First Team squad are intent on achieving that success next season with good levels of player retention and already a couple of possible new joiners. There is also the possibility of one of the travellers returning next season.

We will continue to work with our excellent juniors to give them opportunities in the higher sides and take advantage of their great potential.



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At the other end of the Club, the Fourths and the Fifths will face the challenge of playing in higher leagues next season. If we had a greater number of members, there would be scope for entering a Sixth team at the bottom of the league (with the Fifths next season to be in the third bottom League, 7SW) but, although playing numbers were generally good last season with limited need for players to “double up”, absent an influx at the beginning of next season, we are not going to have the playing strength to do that as yet.

