

HAMPSTEAD AND WESTMINSTER HOCKEY CLUB

16 Church Street,
Hampton,
Middx.,
TW12 2EG
(Telephone: (081)-979 5809
or Answerphone and Fax: (081)-941 1151)

18th October 1991

Dear Old Member,

Where were you? - at the end of last season? You (or the vast majority of you) missed two excellent events:

First, the final London League match against Surbiton. Let me remind you of the scenario: because the National League was increasing the number of its clubs, there would - just for that one season - be no play-off against the winners of other regional leagues: the London League winners would gain automatic promotion. (Incidentally, it's now the Pizza Express National League as well as the Pizza Express London League - our venerable President, Peter Boizot, has taken on the National League sponsorship, too, in place of Poundstretcher. Don't forget to use his restaurants if you're in London and in need of victualling!)

Well, by sheer happenstance, the last fixture of the league season was our 1st XI against Surbiton: they had won every match so far (usually by a hatful of goals), and we had drawn just one (against London University). So, the scene was set: a victory against Surbiton (unbeaten in the league for two seasons) and we would gain promotion, anything else (including a draw) and they would go up. A ding-dong first half with no goals; we went ahead soon after half-time; then hit a post with an open goal; held out till 5 minutes from time, then they equalised from a short corner. So, our chaps did us proud - and, to be quite fair, if Surbiton didn't deserve it on the day, they did for their superior goal-scoring ability over the whole season.

So, to the new season. It's started well enough, with a comprehensive 4-1 victory over Purley - something of a bogey team for us over the last two years. Let's keep our fingers crossed that it is the precursor of a 100% record for us this year, including the promotion play-offs at the end of the season. Incidentally, one thing which must be very heartening for the 1st XI is that their Captain and Coach - Greg Carr - agreed to postpone his return to Australia for another 12 months to try and clinch that promotion. That is very gratifying: as I understand it, his influence has been quite inspirational these last two years, and promotion would be a just reward.

Incidentally, I'm including your copy of this season's fixture card. I'm sure the 1st XI would always welcome your support at their league fixtures - whether at home or away. Note, too, the two games against National League sides - Old Loughtonians and Indian Gymkhana - in January. If you do go along, please make yourself known to Greg (and, of course, to Peter Boizot if he's there), and join them in the clubhouse for a drink after the game.

Now, the second event where you were missed! I told you about the Club Dinner in April. It was very enjoyable. A good meal (not too very expensive), good company (elegant evening dress - particularly on the ladies), good speeches. Some dancing, after the conclusion of formal business, but nothing too rowdy! All-in-all you missed a good evening. And, I hasten to admit, it was improved - in many respects - by the presence of the ladies. I'm not going on to suggest that we should abandon altogether our 'Vintage and Veterans Suppers', but how about holding those, as nostalgic reunions, only every other, or every third, year (maybe if there is a special anniversary or something)? Then, instead, how about an Old Members' table at the Club Dinner? Anyway, when the details of next year's dinner is announced (presumably end-season), I'll circulate you and see if we can work up such a table.

Any more news for you? Just one or two items. Most of the teams had positive results last season and finished well up their respective divisions of the London League (Middlesex League for the ladies' XI's). I don't have exact figures, but I do know that the 5th XI topped its division of the league, but then lost the 'final' (they have play-offs in the lower divisions), so they finished as runners-up of that division. The Veterans Saturday XI had a disappointing season - some clubs are running very strong veterans' teams nowadays. Their Midweek XI is much stronger (playing, I believe, under floodlights) and, once again, performed very creditably overseas - this time at the Munich Oktober-fest Tournament - where they, also, finished as runners-up (and, I understand, performed more than creditably on the social side).

The Club also helped to organise the 'Westminster Challenge' at our home ground (Paddington Recreation Ground) in September. This is a pre-season tournament, promoted by Westminster City Council to support hockey, with 16 of the strongest London clubs competing (including Indian Gymkhana, Teddington and Richmond from the National League). Our entry only finished 8th out of the 16 entrants, but - at that stage of the year - we were only able to get out a combined 1st/2nd XI and, I understand, were lacking a goalkeeper in their early games. A week later, several conscientious members manned a hockey 'stall' at Westminster's 'Open Day' at the ground - this time to promote all of the leisure-time activities available for youngsters in the borough. (Incidentally, our Colts XI continues to flourish, under the enthusiastic leadership of Nick Coleman.)

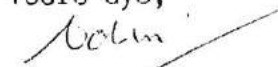
One more news item - this one less happy. Some of you will remember Peter Moon from the 1950's (the re-birth after the War). I didn't know him myself, but Peter Boizot met him at the last World Cup, and I hoped to recruit him to our Old Members' list. However, regrettably, I learned from the Times' obituaries that he died in July - in France, I think, where he had settled.

And another few items (there always turns out to be more to say than I had thought!) The Club has a new supply of ties in the traditional colours - £9 each. But there is also a new bow tie (also in the Club colours) - at £10. If you would like either of those, please get in touch with the Club Captain (Richard Chapman, at 39 Vivian Way, N2 OJA, with your cheque (plus, presumably, a stamp), or ring him on (081)-883 3132. By the way, the Veterans also have a very elegant 'touring' blazer for those who qualify: it received its first outing at the Club Dinner where, with evening dress, it looked very elegant.

I told you about the Middlesex Centenary Dinner (and Dance), on 23rd November at Twickenham Rugby Ground - £20 a head. The Club has a table (we had five members in the County Championship-winning side last year!), and Luther Vye has expressed an interest in coming up from his home in Dorset for the function. But there seems to be some doubt as to the availability of further places. My involvement in the arrangements seems to be getting in the way, so I suggest, if you are interested (particularly ex-Middlesex players) in joining Luther and others at that dinner, that you contact the present Club Secretary (Peter Marshall on (081)-444 6132 (office: (071)-247 5456) just as soon as possible to see if there are any places left. (Incidentally, Luther is on 0929 424 857 if you want to talk.)

I notice that the fixture card has Sunday, 19th January, staked out for the 'Presidents Match'. I imagine this will, as previously, be a general 'Presidents Day': I'll ensure that, nearer the day, you are informed of details - but do write it in your (next year's) diary now.

Yours aye,



COLIN GREENHALGH

(P.S. If you feel like sending a modest donation to cover the cost of the fixture card and mailings, I'm sure the Club would welcome that: to me, with cheques made out to 'Hampstead and Westminster H.C.')