

## City Lunch 2019



At least 70 supporters of the Club comprising the President, Vice Presidents, members, former players and friends attended a lunch held at Smith & Wollensky off the Strand on 8 March 2019. The prime objective was to meet once again and to raise funds for the Club, largely in support of the replacement of the water-based pitch at PRG.

Club President, Richard Sykes welcomed everyone and, in particular, the Club's guests, Royston Hoggarth, the Chairman of England Hockey and Club coaches Sara Kelleher and Kwan Browne.

He mentioned the loss of the use of the sand-based pitch at PRG, following the anticipated installation of a new 4G surface to provide for football, now regarded as unsuitable for competitive hockey. This will place more pressure on pitch allocation and the facilities used by the Club.

He also referred to the rebuilding of the Carlton Tavern. This is now reaching a conclusion at least from the perspective of the external elevations. Completion would lead to a decision whether the Club should aim to re-establish itself there. Negotiations would be needed with the developer or longer-term owner. Richard commented that it was a time of considerable flux. Potentially, it might bring the Club back to the days 70 years ago when it moved its home three times in a decade.

He also mentioned that in celebration of the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a new Club paperback book providing a diary entry for most of the days in the season over those 125 years of the Club, entitled *From Day to Day* had been published. Copies were made available on the various tables.

This season's results were exceptional. The Women's 1st XI was atop the East Conference and if sustained, the team aimed for promotion to the Premier Division. The Men's 1st XI had already secured its participation at the Play Offs on 13 and 14 April at Lee Valley. This would be the third consecutive year this had been achieved. The Men's 2nd XI was on course to win a tenth Premiership in 15 years in the London League. With the League being restructured this year, this propelled the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI to a place in the Premier 1 Division of the South League next season, where they will face the 1st XIs of the leading London and regional clubs not already in the National League.

Royston briefly explained the challenges facing England Hockey but encouraged everyone to follow the newly inaugurated World League in which the GB men had enjoyed recent success abroad. Some home games are scheduled for The Stoop in Twickenham. The main aspiration is to secure sponsorship and television rights, in the hope that the league arrangements might allow hockey to follow the successes achieved world-based competitions in cricket and rugby union.

The television presenter and charity event specialist, Johnny Gould then took to the floor to conduct events that began with a raffle collection and introduced to the later auctions and quiz.



The *heads and tails* quiz required each diner to pay an entrance fee and featured questions about the Club and hockey generally. But in this case, several questions pointed to the exploits

of Peter Boizot. Those who answered the binary questions correctly continued to stand whilst those whose answers were incorrect sat down.

After a few rounds, Johnny opted for drastic action to bring closer a winner. He discarded the carefully calibrated questions and posed one about baseball (given his hosting in the UK of a television programme featuring that sport) and followed it with one about the youth rugby team in which his son played.

This soon reduced number of participants and Club Treasurer, Christine Shrimpton was finally announced the winner, as the last few participants were brought to the front of the room to stand in a line.

Two auctions were held, one silent and the other was the very reverse. Jonny Gould ramped up the pressure and the bids in direct proportion. Prizes included two seats on Number 1 Court at Wimbledon, a case of 2005 Ch Labergorce-Zede from Bordeaux and a holiday in the Seychelles.

Many members wore their Club blazers to the Lunch. Richard Sykes mentioned that there was only a small amount of the textile remaining from which the garment can be tailored. He urged those wanting to do so to place an order quickly. The prior informal qualification for the wearing of a Club blazer to those who have represented the Club on an overseas tour has been relaxed recently, to allow access to members who show by their commitment in buying a token of their connection to the Club.

Richard had been asked by the tailor for a photograph of those in their blazers to celebrate their success. An assemblage was eventually herded together, and this was the result.



All agreed that the event was a success and thanks are owed to Oz Rankin for having organised it. More than £12,000 is believed to have been raised.