

HAMPSTEAD AND WESTMINSTER HOCKEY CLUB

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11th March 1991

Dear Old Member,

I am afraid that - for a variety of reasons - my schedule of 'Old Members' Newsletters' got rather out of kilter this year, and I'm not sure if many of you (if any) received a fixture card (with a recent communication from the President, about which, more later). But here, at least, is your end-of-season letter.

As usual, let me start with news of the 1st XI. Well, it's all pretty good again this year - even better than last, at the moment - and the PizzaExpress London League is building up for a magnificent climax on 23rd March. The situation is that Surbiton (last year's champions) haven't dropped a single point as yet, but we have dropped just one (a rather unlikely 2-2 draw against London University). We even beat Spencer (1-0), to whom we lost last year, and Purley, with whom we drew last year. We just have Beckenham and Blackheath to take (postponed because of the recent bad weather) and, if we do, it's on to the season's climax, which it would be difficult to stage-manage better: the last match of the league season being the decider, for the second year running, against Surbiton. And that climactic match (which, incidentally, we lost 2-5 last year, after holding them to 2-2 with 10 minutes to go) assumes particular importance this year, because the Poundstretcher National League is being expanded next season, so the winners of the London League will be gaining promotion automatically, instead of having to play off against the winners of (I think) five other regional leagues. What a pity it now is that Surbiton - against all the odds - failed to win through last year's play-off, because, if they had, we might have been spared this nail-biting end to this season in order to gain promotion ourselves.

The President - Peter Boizot - mentioned this crucial match to you when he wrote a couple of months ago. I am sure the 1st XI would appreciate just as much support as we can give them. It is an away fixture, played on Reid's School artificial pitch, near Cobham (through Esher on the A307 and then on the left-hand side - Fairmile Lane, I think - as you approach Cobham) - bully-off (sorry, push-back!) at 12 noon. I shall - subject to emergencies - certainly be going along myself to watch and support this one. Do, please, try to come and add your voice if you live anywhere near. You will find modern hockey, played on plastic, quite an eye-opener, and I know that Greg Carr (the 1st XI Captain and Coach) would appreciate your support.

(By the way, I have to admit that it hasn't been roses all the way for the 1st XI this season: they have, as of now, lost three matches altogether. First of all, they were knocked out of the Nationwide Anglia Cup (the equivalent of the H.A. Cup) at an early stage by Blackheath (3-2). Then, during the winter league break, they lost to two National League sides - Indian Gymkhana (4-1) and Teddington (5-0). But the Gymkhana are leading the National League at present and are very well placed to win it, and Teddington are also halfway up the 1st Division table. So those results weren't, by any means, too bad.

All the other teams (except, I think, the Saturday Veterans) - that is, six men's and three ladies' teams - are well in credit with the season's results so far. Indeed, I know that several of them are in contention for the 'top four' play-offs in their respective divisions at the end of the season - particularly the men's 5th and 6th XI's and the ladies' 1st XI. The Saturday Veterans, as I say, are not doing too well this year: other clubs seem to be getting stronger by the year in that department. But the, much stronger, touring side continues to sweep all before it: they won an international veterans' tournament in St. Germain in May, and the very prestigious Eurovets Championship in Lyons in August. Regrettably, they weren't able to muster a team to go to the World Cup Veterans Tournament in Kuala Lumpur (an invitation having been received from the King of Malaysia! in return for our hospitality to his team in the 1986 tournament in London). However, three of their number - the Vets' Skipper, Chris Elliott, the Club Captain, Richard Chapman, and (now retired) schoolmaster John Haynes did join the Llamas party for that trip, and they were very gratified to receive Silver medals for losing to Bataveinen of Holland (all ex-internationals) in the final. Apart from that, they holidayed in Malaysia and, I understand, had a marvellous time!

Now, news from the social front. My last communication was about the 'Vintage and Veterans' Dinner which we organised, in October, to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of Beaker Saunders' election as a member in 1930. There was, I'm afraid, only a modest turnout but it proved, as usual, to be a very congenial evening, and we had Presidents from three other clubs as guests, as well as being delighted to see Don Morphew (who was, himself, Captain of the 3rd XI in the 1930's). Beaker made a speech (as did one or two others of us), and he told me he thoroughly enjoyed the evening - as did we all: suitable recognition of 60 years' loyal service and support. Many thanks, as usual, to Stan Elgar for his stalwart, and somewhat thankless, work in organising this function.

However, there must have been something in Beaker's port: we heard, a month later (25th November), that he got married again! The President and the 1st XI happened to be meeting the evening before, so they were in time to send a telegram from the Club, and I'm sure we would all want to add our belated good wishes to Beaker and his good lady-wife.

You will have received a notification from Peter Boizot about the President's Day on 26th January at Paddington, when the 1st XI played (and beat, 4-3) an invitation XI containing several current internationals. The reason you got this notification with so little notice, and direct from Pater, was because - despite my pleas - the Club didn't fix the date for this function until a very late stage. I don't know, as a result of that, how many of you were able to get along (I, myself, wasn't). I have made representations, on your behalf, that events like this should be arranged further ahead but, so far, to no avail. I will try again before next season comes around!

The next item in the social calendar is the Club's Annual Dinner, which is to be held on Saturday, 13th April, at the Meridien Hotel in Piccadilly. As you know, there is no sort of 'Committee' running our Old Members' affairs, but it is becoming obvious that a 'Vintage and Veterans' Dinner every year is too frequent to attract as much support as we would like. So, in an informal way, I think we are agreed that we should dine less frequently (unless any of you want to make strong representations otherwise) - maybe every other or every 3rd year, unless there is something special (like Beaker's evening) to celebrate. That being so, you might be more interested in attending the full Club Dinner: I understand it has much more 'style' these days than was its wont for a number

of years, with black tie, toasts and speeches etc. (Though, of course, it's still mixed, with - I believe - dancing after dinner, but maybe there's no great harm in that!) It sounds pretty good value, too - £32 a head, to include pre-dinner drink, four courses, wine at table, and after-dinner 'entertainments'. Any old members who wished to attend - with or without wives, or other partners (by no means obligatory!) could join the Veterans' table. So it could, perhaps, serve as a very good surrogate for our own little shindig.

If you are interested, I suggest you apply to me on the attached tear-off slip by the end of March. Then I can pass on your application to the organisers (Karen Pullar and Caroline Brooks), who will despatch your tickets. That will ensure that the 'Vintage' party does sit together and join the 'Veterans' part of the roadshow. (But, if you do want to wait and see what the turnout looks like before making up your mind, give me a ring 2 or 3 days before the end of March, and I'll be able to tell you whether your particular old buddies are planning to attend.)

On the subject of dinners: Middlesex County H.A. are holding a dinner to celebrate the County's Centenary, at Twickenham (R.F.U.) next Autumn, on Saturday, 23rd November. The proposed price is £20 a head and the Club has reserved a table. Any old members - particularly, perhaps, those who played for Middlesex in their day - would be very welcome to join that Club table (or tables). If you are interested, could I suggest that you ring the present Club Secretary, Nick Openshaw, on (071)-249 8696, during the next week or two, and tell him of your interest, so that he can, if necessary, increase the number of places which the Club has earmarked.

By the way, Middlesex duly won the County Championship at the end of last season - for the first time in several years - with five of our 1st XI players (Carr, Dixon, Gallen, Hick and Pearce) in the squad. The winning goal in the final, against Yorkshire, was scored by our own Dave Dixon in the dying minutes of extra time!

And, finally, notification of two other events which may interest you (the second one certainly should):

- a) The Club's A.G.M. will be held at the Clubhouse (Paddington Sports Club, Castellain Rd., near Maida Vale underground station) on Tuesday, 21st May

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To: C. Greenhalgh,  
16 Church St.,  
Hampton,  
Middx., TW12 2EG

H. & W.H.C.: ANNUAL DINNER: 13th APRIL

I wish to attend. I would also like to bring a guest ..... (TICK)

My guest's name (for the seating plan) is: .....

I enclose a cheque, made out to Hampstead and Westminster H.C. (£32 a head)

I and/or my guest would prefer a vegetarian main course ..... (TICK)

Name:.....

at 7.30 p.m. All old members are welcome (I usually try to get there) but, of course, are not entitled to vote.

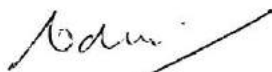
- b) The Club, together with the City of Westminster, is organising a major, prestigious, international tournament at Paddington over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend (25th - 27th May). Men's, ladies' and veterans' teams are expected from Germany, France, Holland, Belgium, Spain and Yugoslavia. Obviously, a great deal still needs to be finalised (I don't know any more than that at this stage). But do write it in your diary now, and I'll try to ensure that you are fully informed as to matches, timings etc. well in advance.

I look forward to seeing you at some or all of those functions (particularly, at the moment, at the Surbiton match - there'll be more to celebrate at the Dinner if we do win that!)

Don't forget my usual plea, to let me know (with addresses) if you come across any old members who would be 'good chaps' to have on the list. I have recruited another two since I last wrote: Nick Mason (1st XI in the 60's), who is now playing for Cheam Veterans (or, at least, one of their middle-order teams), and Mike Yates (Veterans XI in the 70's, and early 80's). Both of them, coincidentally, outside lefts - I believe Mike is still waiting for a pass from his inside-forward! (I got his address, by the way, as a result of seeing a letter of his in The Times!) And I have also circularised Richard Holliday (1st XI in the mid-70's), who played for Wimbledon Veterans against us in January. (In fact, we had a little tiff, when I blew him for ball-in-the-air: I can't be doing with this new-fangled nonsense - hockey was meant to be played on the ground. I shall have to take my step-ladder along if they are going to persist in these aerial passes!) But I obviously only come across a very limited number of ex-members: at a very rough approximation, there must be something like 1,000 post-War members out there somewhere, so your help in recruiting them would be more than welcome.

All the best.

Yours aye,



COLIN GREENHALGH