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10th November 1986

Dear Old Member,

HAMPSTEAD HOCKEY CLUB

As you probably know, I haven't been an officer of the Club for years, but I have agreed with our new President - Peter Boizot - that I will take on responsibility for 'old members' liaison'. So, it is in that capacity that I am writing to you now.

I haven't been terribly active in the Club's affairs myself for several years (Hampton is a long drive from Hampstead - even further from Hornsey). But I still umpire sometimes for the 'Veterans' XI' and I attend occasional Club functions. So, the following potted history of the Club during the last 17 years (since my 'Brief History' at the time of the 75th Anniversary) may not be entirely accurate, but it will give you the flavour of the Club's progress and present activities.

1. After years of disappointment with the Hornsey pitches, we merged into the Hornsey Club in the mid-70's (though we retain our own identity, name etc.) - on the basis that the combined clubs would then put a substantial investment into the pitches.
2. That was done (proper land drains etc.) and they are - at long last - the best they have ever been (except in extreme wet weather).
3. Apart from that, we now have a whole network of artificial pitches on which we can play (as you will know, the game, at the highest level, is increasingly being played on artificial surfaces - as witness the recent Olympics and World Cup). The result is that cancellation of matches is now a much rarer phenomenon than it used to be.
4. In addition, our astute Committee (chaired and master-minded by hockey club members) sold off a semi-derelict bit of the old car park at Hornsey for housing. The results: (a) a much tidier car park, (b) 6 magnificent floodlit tennis courts, with an artificial surface which can be used for hockey training etc., (c) enough money left over to put into pavilion improvements. So, all-in-all, the ground and premises are much improved on the slightly seedy, run-down place you might remember from a few years ago. Really excellent work from all concerned (particularly - as I understand it - from our own Nick Coleman and Norman Borrett).
5. The growth in hockey itself (our raison d'etre, of course) has been explosive over recent years: 7 or 8 XI's on Saturdays, regular Summer hockey, mixed and ladies' hockey (3 regular XI's this season), participation in three different indoor hockey leagues - I find the scale of it unrecognisable from my days as Secretary. (And a tremendous task on the part of the Committee and other officials, who manage to keep such a show on the road.)
6. The 1st XI hasn't won any trophies for some time, but they usually reside in the middle reaches of the London League ( a really high-class competition, obviously), and the 2nd and 3rd XI's have been in the 'play-offs' of their divisions of the League (in effect, the 'semi-finals') in recent seasons. (Yes, teams right down to the 4th XI's now have their own divisions of the London League.)
7. Incidentally, one really important kudo for the Club, is that our recently elected President - Peter Boizot (for years, the most loyal and generous member you could imagine, and a stalwart of the Veterans XI, which he was

largely responsible for founding some 15 years ago) - has recently become the sponsor of that prestigious London League on behalf of his restaurant chain, and it is now known as the Pizza Express London League. (Branches, by the way, all over London and the provinces - consult your local telephone directory for the nearest one to you!)

8. On a sad note, I must tell you, in case you weren't aware, that Ruari Milsted - our erstwhile President and moving force in getting the Club re-started after the War - died last year: Stan Elgar and I represented the Club at his funeral. The other members of that famous triumvirate still flourish - John Sankey (though even he admits to 'getting on a bit' and he is living with his daughter in Leicestershire), and Beaker Saunders (who was up at the Clubhouse recently for the Veterans Tournament - see later).
9. Which brings me to my final up-date, in this very rapid scamper through recent Club history. You may not know (the national press did not cover it very assiduously), that the recent World Cup competition at Willesden was accompanied by a 'World Cup Veterans Tournament' - with 80 teams from all over the world competing. (Yes, literally 'all over the world' - Australia, Zimbabwe, Malaysia etc. etc: Real Polo Club of Barcelona were the eventual winners.) Up to the quarter-final stage, the tournament was divided between 8 venues dotted around London - it then moved to the national stadium at Willesden - and we were proud to be selected as one of those venues. Apart from running a very successful tournament over 3 days at Hornsey (on lovely pitches, with glorious weather to match), the Organising Committee (too numerous to mention by name) also ran several enjoyable social functions for our visitors, including an excellent dinner at the Cherry Tree in Southgate, attended by 250 members and guests - including the President of the H.A., the retiring Secretary, and his recently appointed successor. Amongst that multitude of hockey players from overseas - the teams from Zimbabwe and Malaysia were both in our group, as well as two from Germany, a team of French ex-internationals etc. - it was very pleasant to greet Bill Fletcher, Ian Hayward, Morley Pecker and Berry Bermingham as 'non-playing veterans' of our own. As well as that, Beaker, Kip Stafford and David Lowden also put in an appearance at Hornsey during the tournament. (By the way, Eastcote won the group at our ground, then lost in the quarter-finals to Teddington: Hampstead, I am afraid, only came 8th out of the 10 teams in our pool.)

Is that an adequate up-date for the time being? (Additions and corrections in future issues.) I hope to get something like this out once or twice a year, and you are welcome to receive it provided you express interest on the tear-off slip enclosed. But, in addition to that, the Club Secretary has said that he would let you have a fixture card (subject to supplies being available, if demand is heavy) - and even, if you are that interested, regular copies of the Club's fortnightly team sheets and bulletin. Though, of course, those two items couldn't be done for free: again, let me know on the tear-off slip if you are interested.

Now, to finish with an invitation. Every year, towards end-November/early December, John Haynes raises an 'International XI' to play against the Veterans. (Well, he did once get a New Zealand teacher colleague to play! No, seriously, he had two Dutch friends come over specially to play last year, and I do believe he has an Australian, a German, and a Frenchman from the recent World Cup in his team this year!) The game is always followed with a little appropriate merry-making in the pavilion, of course. This fixture is scheduled, this year, for 29th November, and we have decided to designate that 'Old Members' Day'. So, please come along to Hornsey for the game (2.30 start) - learn all about the rule changes since your day (I wish I could, and I am only an umpire), stay for some tea and good cheer, and meet some of your old chums.

.....(The final page of this letter just went on to give various admin. details about teas, cancellation etc., which there is no point in repeating now.)