



## **2020 AGM Chairman's Report**

Goodness, what a strange old year!!

After the debacle of the 2019 season where every team was relegated, I felt a heartache I didn't think I would ever experience at HCC. It wasn't necessarily the fact that we were relegated but more the manner in how it came about. This led to an awful lot of soul searching and many of our senior members agreed not to have a knee jerk reaction but to take some time to take stock and try to take some positive points from the situation.

In a strange way relegation was probably a good thing to have happened as we had been drifting along with no real purpose for some time with many taking a lot for granted. It gave us the opportunity to take a long hard look at ourselves, what we could improve and put the plans in place to make it happen. We talked to people and commissioned a survey where we asked the players what changes they would like to see and to be fair the response was impressive. We then held a players meeting in October 2019 where we outlined the results and more importantly what the committee were going to do with the findings.

To be honest everyone signed up to the initiative and we were all looking forward to an exciting season where hopefully our 1<sup>st</sup> X1 would gain promotion.

Then along came COVID.

Like everybody else, nobody knew how it would pan out and as a result all cricket was postponed indefinitely with no leagues, no friendlies and no junior cricket. The club was effectively shut but the Government eventually relaxed some of the restrictions and we were at least able to open the bar with the area between the pavilion and the square becoming a gigantic beer garden. Our very own Shaka and the bar staff did a fantastic job in ensuring we all kept our distance, which at times became tricky the more we relaxed we became after enjoying a few beers following weeks in lockdown.

This initiative not only gave some much needed income to the club but greatly improved people's mental health as well by being able to get out and about, socially distanced of course. Then after a few weeks the Government again relaxed restrictions and allowed cricket to be played once more. After a couple of friendlies the league organised the August Cup where the two men's teams we entered both did reasonably well but more importantly, we had some cricket to play and watch. Our women's team had more success reaching the final of the Sussex Slam Cup before losing out to Eastbourne. The season was a very strange affair with all players arriving in their whites as all

changing facilities were closed and no mid-innings teas in place either. As it turned out nobody really missed these usual aspects of the game as they had more time at home.

This inadvertently caused a national furore when the Sussex League canvassed clubs as to whether the traditional cricket tea could be suspended and replaced with a snack. Wind of this caught the attention of no less than Piers Morgan who created a 'Save the cricket tea' campaign on his Good Morning Britain show.

After a period when the morale in the club was at pretty low ebb, I'm pleased to say that the demeanour is now vastly improved as was demonstrated with Ben Williams' enthusiasm there for everyone to see. This had a knock-on effect with people at last playing with a smile on their face.

With finances a little stretched, we decided to mothball the JDG/ grass nets and play all games and practice on the main square which was a real treat for the juniors who rarely got the opportunity to appear on the principal ground. However, we rolled out a couple of pitches on the JDG ground in September as the Sussex Cricket Foundation was desperate to complete the Sussex Slam Finals day and Horsham is the ideal venue to hold such prestigious events with both grounds in operation.

As I'm writing this in early February, we still have no real indication how the situation will pan out. Vaccinations are being rolled out and hopefully we will be able to hold a full season. The Sussex League is planning for a complete campaign, but certain restrictions may still be in place at the start. We start the upcoming season as we finished the previous year with all captains and vice captains in place where we will be hoping for an instant return to the Premier League. The 1<sup>st</sup> X1 start their campaign at home to Lindfield, the 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 away at West Wittering and our 3<sup>rd</sup> team at home to Crawley Eagles. Our women begin their season at home to Hampstead in the Southern League.

2021 is our Sestercentennial anniversary for which we had hoped to have a full year of celebrations with major events, fixtures and a formal dinner and dance. However, with COVID still very much in evidence with no real end in sight, our committee decided to postpone the festivities until the following year when hopefully the pandemic will have been brought under control and life will be back to some sort of normality, if it ever can be. We feel that such a wonderful milestone should have the kudos it deserves and not be almost relegated to a part time event. As part of the celebrations we commissioned a portrait of the ground from local artist Paul Talbot, which will be auctioned off at a suitable time, but we do have some prints available. In addition we have some notelets; details of how you can purchase these are attached. One thing that the club has been working on is the publication of a souvenir brochure which is well on the way to completion.

Other than League games, we still hope to have a few extra fixtures including the MCC men's and women's matches and hopefully the Royal London 50 over competition when it would be great for Sussex to return to Cricketfield Road after a gap of six years. They were due to come last year when Gloucester was the visitors but COVID put paid to that. However, some of the other proposed fixtures are likely to be mothballed until 2022.

Another area we can report on is that at long last there appears to be movement on the development of the groundsman's cottage. As you know the area has drifted into decline but despite several fruitless negotiations and near agreements with the Council, matters always seemed to stall

at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour. However, we have finally agreed a package which should see the area developed to a good standard.

Unfortunately the restrictions the pandemic has put in place has also meant that we have had to postpone the AGM until later in the summer when hopefully we can hold a fully functional meeting. However, as business needs to continue, the committee made the decision to re-elect the Officers in its entirety other than the Secretary. Kate Huddleston, who was in this role for five years, has decided to stand down and I would like to take this opportunity of thanking her for all her hard work during this time. Her involvement not only centred on the administration but she also took an active role in our junior section. Polly Clark has taken over as Secretary in addition to her duties as Welfare Officer.

Also standing down are Graham Charlton who is our Junior General Manager and Oli Wassell who served on the committee. Graham is still going to be involved with coaching but Oli is taking up a work position in Singapore for which we offer him and his family the very best of success.

Despite a shortened season, work within the club still had to continue and as always Colin Mitcham was front and centre of most things and we would be in a sorry state if it wasn't for Mitch's guidance and calm head.

It goes without saying that the pandemic has caused all sorts of problems with people having to react very quickly to the events unfolding. For example, the cricket restrictions were relaxed giving clubs literally three weeks to arrange fixtures and get the ground ready. Chris Shambrook (Shaka) not only had to mastermind the opening of the bar with all the issues associated with that, but then arranged matches for two men's teams whilst liaising with junior, women's and outside organisations wishing to use our ground. Hopefully we can all agree that Shaka did a fantastic job.

Our thanks must always go to a few people who helped during the season, Bob Daisley, Keith Walder, Tom Hogsflesh, Neil Chartres and Carole Whiting and it only leaves me to offer my sincere appreciation for all their efforts.

A few of our members are currently struggling with ill health and our thoughts are with them and wish them speedy recoveries.

***Richard Marshall***

### ***2020 AGM 1<sup>st</sup> X1 Report***

2020 was a very tough year for everyone. Despite these difficulties, the club was able to open for business and thankfully we were able to get some cricket in too. This was in the form of the August Cup.

While our results in the competition weren't what we'd hoped for (won 1, lost 4), there were plenty of encouraging signs to take away against tough opposition. All teams in our group were from the Premier League.

James Brehaut continued to hone his skills with the new ball and looked dangerous every time he bowled.

Jake Martin was a great addition to the club and brought a lot of energy with his accurate opening spells. His opening spell away at Roffey was a highlight. He'll be a valuable member of the club looking ahead to 2021.

The biggest improvement last season was the commitment from all players at the club to participate in training. We had two full nets, fielding drills and individual stations set up every week which was encouraging to see. This was a dramatic improvement on previous years and the more people attending, the more enjoyable the sessions were. I'd like to quickly thank the 'training facilitator', Andy Beer for offering up his time to help run these sessions too.

Looking ahead to 2021, the 1<sup>st</sup> X1 have the very clear goal of getting back to the Premier League as soon as possible. Chris Nash has returned to the club after being an Outlaw for a few years and it'll be great to have him around the club to share his many years of experience with the rest of the players. I'm hopeful that the restrictions will be eased, allowing us to get a full season in. We eagerly await the start of the season.

I hope you're wintering well and we'll arrange some pre-season training as soon as we're able to.

***Michael Thornely***

#### ***2020 AGM 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 Report***

For our 2<sup>nd</sup> X1, the restricted 2020 Cup was all about rebuilding following a disappointing previous season whereby no wins were registered. The main objective was therefore to bring a level of enjoyment back to the team that had dipped due to so many consecutive losses.

This was the full set of games I was able to take the helm as Captain, following a horrific leg break that forced me to become a batting all-rounder...!! and the results and atmosphere amongst what was predominantly a young side were extremely promising. Out of the five games in the August Cup we won three games, which included wins against Barns Green 1<sup>st</sup> X1, a thriller against Wisborough Green 1<sup>st</sup> X1 and local rivals, Three Bridges 2<sup>nd</sup> X1. We were beaten by a strong Southwater 1<sup>st</sup> X1 in the final game, who was deserved winners of the Cup.

There were some notable achievements from our promising young Lions, including Rahul Tangirala and Manav Parekh who performed consistently with both bat and ball throughout. Opening bowlers Louis Cooper and Deyan Patel also showed great signs with the new ball. There was also great support from the more senior players of the club such as Ollie Wassell and Darren Jordan who were pivotal in a few of the wins.

This was therefore a successful season for the 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 which provides us with great building blocks for whatever 2021 has in store.

***Jonny Whiting***

#### ***2020 AGM Women's Report***

We are pleased to report that we did manage to play some competitive cricket in 2020, despite having the Southern Women's 45 over League matches cancelled at the start of the season.

This only left us with the Sussex Slam T20 Competition where we played eleven games winning eight and reaching the Trophy Final, but just edged out by Eastbourne on our Dr Dew Ground at the end of September. After a will we, won't we be playing any cricket in 2020, it was great to get some games in.

Even with the reduced number of matches, we managed to produce some great positives. We welcomed two new Sussex age group players in Sophie Grayson and Lily Ward. Both girls immediately bonded with the group, and showed maturity and good cricket knowledge. Sophie opened the batting with a strike rate of 126.09 with Lily keeping wicket and batting.

Horsham Cricket Club's women's section is widely recognised as a club where young players are welcomed and given the opportunity to step up and play senior cricket. We look forward to every player continuing their development and progression in 2021.

Some of the stand out performances in this shortened season was Sophie Whittington with 3-17 from three overs, Izi Noakes, 4-7 from four and skipper Hannah Phelps leading the way with 226 runs, and a top score of 55.

It is of course a team effort and our thanks go to all our players; Lottie J, Molly B, Sophie K, Kiera L, Bessie B, Steph D, Fleur D, Tyla W, Charlie W, Sophie S, Flora B, Izzy C.

Our thanks also go to Alan Smith who returned to coach our women and girls with great enthusiasm and huge knowledge and we are looking forward to working with him again in 2021.

Thanks must also go to Keith W and Karen W for umpiring and scoring for us and we greatly appreciate their efforts and time.

To our supporters who came along, suitably socially distanced, we hope you had some good days out. Thank you.

Looking forward to 2021, we are entered in the Southern Women's League and the Sussex Slam T20. Fingers crossed, we will be back in 2021 with cricket as we know it, let's hope.

Hannah Phelps, Captain  
Izi Noakes, Vice-Captain

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