



## GUILDFORD HOCKEY CLUB

AFFILIATED TO SURREY HOCKEY ASSOCIATION AND ENGLAND HOCKEY  
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### AGM 2022 – Club President’s Report – 2021/22

Hello!

For possibly the last time on zoom you are all very welcome to our AGM.

#### A quick look back at 2021/22

Following the EH AGM in March 2021 we ie The Board, knew it was going to be a busy summer – September 2021 would see the launch of completely new leagues across the whole country, new organisations were formed to run the new 8 areas, and the IT system was under development to back up the whole project. I think it's fair to say that the vast majority of ordinary hockey players didn't have much awareness about these huge changes and probably weren't too bothered so long as when September arrived there would be matches to play. And so it proved....the IT system didn't work well enough, and at times we muddled through as the New South East area league began.

In the background covid was still with us - new variants, mass vaccinations, and a general hope that we would soon be out of all restrictions.

In this light it is remarkable that we have such an amazing season both on and off on the pitch to look back on. Both Men’s and Women’s 1st XIs were promoted to national league with six other teams earning promotion, national championship winning teams and generally strong performances across both adult and junior sections. The detail on this is well covered in the latest edition of *The Scoop* sent out recently - so if you haven't read it yet - please do!

Our infrastructure was upgraded with the resurfacing of the green pitch and then in December we opened our new practise area with a great Alumni Day. Added to the pitches is the fabulous array of artwork displaying just how good GHC is.

The new schools programme has been successfully introduced into 22 schools locally, bringing hockey to a wide range of Year 5 pupils. We also started our own Future Stars programme as a precursor to becoming part of the new England Hockey

Talent Development system for when these new contracts would be awarded. So, the number of young people playing hockey in the area has grown, not just in our junior section but also in the wider community. We learned at the end of April that we had been awarded one of 17 EH licences to host a Talent Academy so that will be another new venture to bring into play next season.

But growth is not confined to the junior section. We added 2 new adult teams to the senior section, with one winning their division! Both the Men's and Women's Back to Hockey has been more productive than ever with new faces appearing almost weekly! The growth of Masters hockey is a fantastic channel to keep all of us playing hockey enjoyably for many more years that we might have thought possible in our 30s and 40s.

This year was also the first time we entered the EH Women's Masters Championship and I hope word of our cup-winning exploits at Tier 2 has reached you. For me personally it was just the best day out! 51 years after I first picked up a stick at Banbridge Academy I was the very proud holder of a National medal. Sadly, the new medals are not quite as grand as the solid silver medal won by my father in the Irish Schools Cup in 1944 but just as cherished.

On a sadder note, this year we lost two long term supporters of the club. Valerie Pearse was a regular supporter of her husband Nick as a senior player and then into the Gondoliers. They were regular supporters of the Men's 1st team for many years. Likewise, Nolan Highton was a tremendous club member, providing all the teas and organising dinners and social events together with his lovely wife, Rosemary.

### **So what's next?**

We have exciting hockey to look forward to with both 1st XIs playing in the National Conference East league. Five promotion-winning teams will tackle new opponents in higher leagues and our junior section will look to repeat if not improve their results in their league and cup competitions. We have restructured a little in the Men's section moving a team from South East to the London Master's league and will certainly find new challenges in providing more umpires and team managers to cover all these games.

The GMS system that controls the IT side of competitive hockey has been improved so that it now works considerably better than last September. We all have to become familiar with it as the responsibility lies with each member to complete their registration. It will be the universal system for all EH competitions and while last season was effectively a trial year, moving forward we will not be able to avoid penalties if we breach the rules. The League rules have been reviewed and have some changes that will affect our umpiring and post-match processes. It may be a slightly rude awakening, but I am confident that we will fully capable of mastering the system.

For obvious reasons the last two seasons have been sadly lacking in social activities at the club. We managed 2 great events this year with the fancy dress quiz night and then a real party night for the end of season awards. The Mens 1s got the award for being the last to leave, but I think the ladies Masters won the non-stop dancing prize! So we are looking forward to more social nights, and ideas for themes are always welcome as are volunteers to run things!

### **Star performers....**

We have struggled at times to say Thank You in a meaningful way to the many people who help make the club what it is. This year saw a stream of nominations for our 'Star of the Week' and everyone was a worthy winner for stepping up and putting in that extra effort. As well as the winners, the nominations were widespread across the club and showed an appreciation of everything those members do. Anyone nominated was a winner. Again, the full list of winners and nominations are there for all to see in *The Scoop*.

But there were some people whose efforts would have not been universally known and who delivered tremendous service to the club. On your behalf I'd like to thank

- Charlie Haynes and Jason Sobey for their help in getting the practise area designed and built and for the sponsorship they organised to help with the cost.
- Every Saturday and Sunday we have myriads of teams playing on pitches at the club, Charterhouse and Prior's Field. Between them every fixture is booked by either Mike Fitter or Malcolm Francis. This key activity is crucial to maximising our pitch use at the lowest cost and their attention to detail and communication means that teams turn up at the right pitch at the right time. Mike also runs our Men's Back to Hockey and organises 2 Men's league teams as well as the summer masters over 60s games. He won our clubman of the year award this year - richly deserved.
- As the club has grown, the need for umpires has also grown. Matt Desouza has again managed to produce an umpiring rota each Saturday so that no captain is left in the lurch. We also had some umpires assessed so that if a qualified umpire is required, we have some more to draw upon. This is another area we will focus on so that umpires are supported and competent to tackle any game.
- In the clubhouse Andrew and Melanie and their team continue to provide our excellent teas and bar service. Tony and Dave Hall watch over the fabric of the building, get repairs and cleaning scheduled and also can be found on busy social evenings with their aprons on.
- As President I watch a lot of hockey and I see the number of coaches and managers and captains doing their bit week in week out. Some faces are new just starting out on their GHC journey often helping with their children's teams, but others have been familiar stalwarts over many seasons. Every contribution however small makes GHC better so thank you to everyone who has made a difference. Our coaching team is fantastic across the club, at all levels.

- Some of the Big Hitters have to be the Board Members:
  - Mike Kefford and Jo Collins as club captains are always aware of teams, captains, players and making sure we are operating a fair selection. Incorporating new players arriving at the club is not always easy but they make sure everyone gets noticed and a team found.
  - Mark Lenel has kept his usual keen watch on our finances which this year has been a challenge with the new practise area to be paid for and anticipating increases in costs. He and Mike K also have the lead with our relationship with Broadwater School.
  - Melinda Rock has again stayed up very late into the nights getting the weekly *InTouch* out as well as putting together our newest publication, *The Scoop*. In addition to running our overall Club Communications programme, Melinda is our Club Secretary and is also still heavily involved in the Junior section despite all her juniors having flown the nest. Melinda and Cathy Sanderson were responsible for getting the artwork around the pitches designed, produced and installed – including putting up stepladders and bribing family to climb them.
  - Dave Dickson has continued this year being the membership supremo. Teamo may be an excellent tool for picking teams and collecting match fees, but he will be the first to tell you its limitations, too. Amongst many other things Dave tackles sorting out the data so that we know who our members really are and whether or not they have paid!
  - James Relph has moved his focus on the Board from our Partnership role to looking more at longer term direction and planning from Melinda (who has more than enough to do). We know we need to keep looking ahead and preparing for new challenges, so James is now committed to this. He was also responsible for organising the Alumni Day and the end of season party so say Thank You when you next see him!
  - Our newest Board Member, Emily Smith, has taken on the Partnership role from James Relph. Many of her ideas, from her deep and valuable experience, are starting to take hold and the Partners we attract will have much stronger ties to the club as a result.
- And finally.....Dan Fox continues to be an exceptional Director of Hockey for GHC. His influence touches every aspect of the club, at all ages and from the newest beginner to the most elite. As Mike K said at the end of season party - when you appoint someone you don't know for certain you got it right at first. With time we can say that we most certainly did - Dan's personality, commitment to the Club and to the development of hockey has acted as a beacon for GHC to attract in and develop from within many coaches and managers and other volunteers. He is not just a star of the week but of every week!

There are others I have not mentioned but I've only got 5 mins or so.....and most of you know I'm not good at confining myself to that sort of time frame.



GUILDFORD  
HOCKEY CLUB



I'm looking forward to an exciting season ahead, I hope you are too.

MAGgs

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