

Chairman Review 2022

For a variety of reasons, 2021 proved to be just as difficult, if not more difficult, than 2020.

Our major fundraising efforts were restricted (or even abandoned) due to Covid, and the (seemingly) constant changes in what we could and couldn't do in terms of the bar and social events made managing them extremely stressful for all concerned – And that was before we were remembering to sanitise everything! And even then we had some 'complaints' from the public about compliance. I am not making a political comment here, but had I known what was happening in Downing Street whilst we were all spinning ourselves into the ground trying to comply, I would probably have told Dawn not to bother about it.

Because of Covid restrictions, there was not fete, and other events were hampered – So once again we were reliant on John, Sue and Dawn working out grants, what we could apply for and couldn't and then getting as much funding in as we could. Once again, the club is indebted to them.

As they say though, every cloud has a silver lining and if nothing else, Covid has forced us to look outside and taught us how to become more effective in obtaining grant funding, and this is something we will look to utilise going forward.

2022 promises to be a full year in fundraising and socially, we hope that you all rally to the cause and help out at these events, especially the fete, which could be a major boost to the club if you do.

Our thanks go to Dawn, Mike and everyone else who helped to organise events, staff them, and thus make such a big contribution to the club. There is no better site than Jones Lane full of people watching a cricket match – sat outside sharing a drink and having fun. We have had no end of positive feedback from local residents and the Council about the environment and the ground – and credit goes to everyone for this.

Steve Chiverton, as always, played his part in all this – Despite the additional preseason ground repairs not taking as soon as we wished, the wickets everyone played on were as good as any in Hampshire, and in many cases better. Steve is stepping down as groundsman and the search is on for his replacement, they will have big shoes to fill, hopefully Steve will be on hand to offer advice and guidance, as no one knows each blade of grass on the square as he does. Thank You Steve for everything you have (and continue to) done for the club.

Continuing our off field summary, as always we owe a debt of thanks to a hard working committee, who have risen to every challenge once again, as always, new ideas are welcomed and anyone who is prepared to work with us on a great committee is welcome.

We have set in wheels some more innovations that hopefully bear fruit this year, but one I think everyone is aware of is the live streaming of games. It has been brilliant to see, and watch! And our thanks go to Sam for putting so much work into it. I am sure he will be logging in to check on our progress this year!

Our Colts section continues to flourish. That we had so many youngsters playing league cricket at all levels last season speaks volumes for the work Andy and his team do, the colts are the future of this club and are in good hands.

A personal highlight for me has been Friday evenings watching our Under 9's play a form of the game in which, due to (not very) carefully orchestrated chaos on the Hythe side, left opponents bewildered and spectators crying with laughter. It is a reminder to us all that at its heart, cricket is supposed to be fun.

All Stars was again a roaring success, despite being badly affected by the weather. Hopefully this year will be drier which will enable us to have a distinct separation in time between Saturday morning fun and Tuesday evening development of Dynamo cricket, which we will run for a second season. Many thanks to Dawn for all her hard work organising these activities – All Stars in particular is bearing fruit with the number of parents and children becoming involved in the club.

The Ladies section continues, under Dawn's guidance, to flourish, it has been great to see them develop their game with smiles on their faces. The Ladies day was a great success and watching the ladies play and train is another reminder to us all – Cricket is supposed to be fun.

On the field, it was a mixed season. The first team struggled with availability – Even having to cancel a game due to the number of Covid absentees – form and injury, despite their best efforts, in the end they were relegated from the SPL and play next season in the Hampshire Leagues where they will try to bounce back. No one is prouder than I at the effort and commitment Tom and the team gave, they never gave up trying and were a credit to us all, not just last season, but for several years before, Tom steps down for a new captain to take the helm this year. We will return to the SPL.

The seconds were hampered by having to give so many players to the first team and it is a credit to Andy, and Shaun and Kevin that they managed to put a team out good enough to finish mid table.

As indicated above, it was a challenge for Shaun and Kevin to get two teams out at times and they excelled in achieving the league positions they did, especially bleeding many youngsters who will have benefitted from the experience.

Thank you to all the captains and assistants in helping make things work in a difficult year for everyone.

Sundays continued to bring people to the ground and it's great to see such a vibrant atmosphere every weekend at the clubhouse.

As is now usual for me, a desperate plea to anyone who is willing to help out on match days with scoring, teas (if they are allowed again!) and helping with the bar – All of which would help the team tremendously – And for volunteers to help out around the club and for fundraising events. We have a small, dedicated team and they can only do so much, we need to support them before they burn themselves out trying to make everything happen for you all the way it does.

This is a great club. Let's keep it a great club.