

Dear Member

At this time of year the board are busy preparing for the Annual General Meeting. I hope my letter and the attaching accounts will assist you in being better informed on what has been going on during the period and where the revenue received through subscription income, bar and catering has been spent. Why not come along to the Annual General Meeting and support those who run the Club on your behalf?

2008 saw the departure from the Board of Ron Yates. Ron had been the backbone of the refurbishment work for a number of years and we were sorry to lose his expertise. Ron's departure added to an already depleted board. However, I am pleased to say that Bob Gaywood has now been co-opted onto the board to fill one of the available spaces. Following Bob's co-option a reshuffle has taken place in respect of board responsibility. Pat Crane has kindly agreed to take over responsibility for refurbishment and Bob Gaywood and David Brooks will now look after the grounds. All other responsibilities remain unchanged.

My thanks to all my Board colleagues for their support during the last year.

Finance

The accounts for the year ending 31st December 2008 are enclosed from which you will notice that we have again managed to show a profit. Although a little down on the previous year, the amount of £17,141, before Corporation Tax, underlines another challenging trading year for the Club. This profit is after taking into account the cost of the continuing refurbishment programme, as well as undertaking necessary repair work.

Bar sales, at £281,085, have increased but only by £2,160 (0.8%) over last year, with the gross profit percentage slipping slightly to 59.9%. The increase this year is disappointing, considering the price increases that were implemented as a result of supplier and government increases during the year. Catering sales at £182,102 show an increase of £1,487, (0.8%) over the previous year, with the gross profit percentage slipping to 43.9%.

Member subscription income increased this year by £6,459 (6.3%), primarily as a result of an increase in the overall subscription rate as actual membership numbers have dipped slightly. Sports section income, excluding the additional one-off payment by the Tennis section in respect of the Lawn Tennis Association Loan repayment of £6,300, showed a decrease this year of £141 (1.0%).

During the year the Club's total expenditure increased by £19,790 (5.9%). The cost of the continued refurbishment programme and general maintenance was £61,519, an increase of £8,217 (15.4%). As I have mentioned in previous years' reports, the board has highlighted and budgeted for a continuation in the refurbishment expenditure over the coming years which will see the Club maintained in an excellent state of repair.

Other areas of expenditure include the upkeep of the grounds, which increased by £1,325 (6.7%) and light/ heat which increased by £2,745 (11.6%), due to continuing price increases from our energy suppliers, of which we are all aware. General and Water rates decreased by £4,489 returning to a more normal level of charge after last year's one-off catch up charge for sewage. Wages and salaries increased by £5,677 (3.3%), which was mainly due to the annual incremental increase in April 2008. The cleaning and waste disposal regime at the Club has recently been reviewed brought about by the vast amount of waste accumulation throughout the Club, which resulted in an overall increase in the cost of cleaning and waste removal of £6,450 (26.1%). Following this review the Club has moved to a new supplier, which will considerably reduce our costs, whilst at the same time increasing the Club's recycling.

There were no other notable movements in costs in the year.

At the year-end the Club had cash and bank balances of £59,940, a decrease of £19,067 over 2007. Of this cash balance members have loaned £17,366, a reduction of £2,059 since 2007 and £45,529 is held in section funds under the pooled banking arrangement, a decrease of £3,112 over 2007. During the year the Club and Tennis section repaid the balance of the outstanding Lawn Tennis Association loan at a cost of £17,400.

Looking ahead – The board expect 2009 to be a difficult year financially. This has been confirmed following the receipt of a letter from Sevenoaks District Council advising us that they have reduced our discretionary rate relief from 80% to 40%, increasing the Club's business rates by £7,450 this year over last year. This is, however, after an appeal against the original reduction of no discretionary rate relief at all, which would have seen an increase of nearly £15,500, equivalent to almost all 2008's profit.

On the positive side the Club membership appears to be holding at the same level as last year. The board are looking at all expenditure and will continue to monitor all areas and make savings wherever possible. As mentioned previous, the Club's waste removal contract has been moved to a new supplier and changes are imminent for both electricity and gas suppliers.

Refurbishment – This year saw the completion of the refurbishment of the toilet areas adjacent to the front entrance and adjacent corridor. This was a project of particular interest to me as for sometime I felt that the ladies area could be much better designed. I hope, like me, all you ladies are pleased with the end result.

I know all those who play field sports are anxious to know the current situation regarding the replacement of the field toilets. I am delighted to say that the Club has received planning permission for a permanent toilet area, to be situated in the same area as the previous building. My thanks to John Griffiths for his expertise in obtaining this permission. There is still a long way to go before building can commence and I hope that we will be in a position to start the building sometime in late summer. In the meantime we will be providing portaloos as a temporary measure.

Bar – The monthly Sunday carvery, along with the speciality evenings, have proved to be a tremendous success. Steve continues to provide an excellent variety of ales and lagers as well as wines from the countries covered by the speciality evenings. Cathy continues to provide a wide variety of home cooked meals as well as the usual menu throughout the year.

The recent introduction of discount cards has proved extremely successful under the watchful eyes of Peter Bryant and Alan Teale, who ensured a successful transition on 1st March 2009.

Staffing – I am pleased to say that there has been no movement in staff throughout the year, which is good for the Club. I am indebted to all staff who always seem to provide a welcome greeting. I was particularly pleased this year that one of our younger members of staff was able to be of assistance to the ambulance service in an emergency at the Club. The actions of Robert Cluett highlighted to the board the importance of first aid training, which prompted the recent St John Ambulance training course at the Club in recent weeks.

My thanks to all those who work at the Club for their efforts throughout the year.

Membership – There seems to be some confusion regarding bringing guests to the Club and I thought I would take this opportunity of reminding everyone of the ruling. Each member may bring up to 3 guests, including a spouse, at any one time into the Club and these guests may only visit 6 times during any 12 month period. These guests must be signed into the Visitors Book. The Club has, with the various types of membership, attempted to accommodate the numerous grumbles and groans we have received when reminding members about bringing guests to the Club. I would ask members therefore to abide by the ruling and encourage those of their guests who visit the Club regularly to join.

Sport – below is a short summary of the various sports available at the Club. For information on these sports please see the Club's website www.hartleycountryclub.co.uk.

Badminton have managed to encourage several new members recently to join which has resulted in club evenings now being held on Tuesdays and Thursdays. A mixed team regularly plays in the Rainham and District Badminton League and are currently place mid-table in their division. In a bid to encourage new members, the section would like to hear from players who perhaps haven't played for a few years and who would be willing to give the game another try.

Bowls - Both the ladies and men's sections continue to have a healthy fixture list combining league and friendly fixtures as well as mid-week games. National, County and Local district competitions are also entered throughout the season with varying levels of success. The Club has one of the largest and finest bowling greens in the county. The social side of the section is second to none. In common with other clubs they would like to see new members in order to maintain their fixture list and to this end the section has a number of qualified instructors/coaches who would be prepared to give instruction on the game.

Cricket had another extremely successful year with the 1st XI winning the Kent League Premiership at the first attempt. In the process they became the first team from outside the original members of that division, since it was formed, to win the Premiership. Everything was in the balance until the last Saturday of the season when heavy rain for almost 48 hours wiped out virtually every cricket match in the county allowing Hartley a win by just three points. In addition, the 2nd XI had another very good season and just missed out on promotion whilst the 4th XI did gain promotion to Division 2, a great effort particularly as the side was made up almost entirely of older section members and young colts. It is hoped that these successes will encourage more players to come and play at Hartley and to this end the section are intending to start playing matches again on Wednesday afternoons, after a gap of six years.

Golf society continues with its usual three events throughout 2009. These events are excellent value for money and are usually over-subscribed. This year the presentation dinner was held on Valentine's day at the Club; another excellent evening organised by Clive Young who tirelessly organises the golf days.

This season the **Junior football** club has run 8 teams in the league, ranging from age 6 to 16 with a mixture of success. Around 110 local boys and girls have enjoyed the opportunity to play football in a friendly environment at one of the best facilities in the league. This season has also seen the inauguration of the under 8 team which has proved to be a great success. The Junior football club is currently working towards FA Chartered Status, which it hopes to complete in the near future. Although a winter sport, training does continue throughout the summer at Manor Fields on Friday nights from 5.30pm to 7pm. (older children on Saturday mornings).

Petanque is still going strong with 69 members in the English Petanque Association (EPA) and 7 social members. The section runs seven teams (all named after birds of prey) in the summer league and four in the winter league. Success for the Merlins and the Kestrels provided promotion to Division 2 to join another of their teams. The competitions committee organises summer and winter singles and doubles competitions as well as triples finals days and will be holding a Kent Petanque Association regional qualifying day, as well as four other open competitions where teams from other clubs will visit Hartley to do battle. The French club, Cauchy, were entertained at Hartley last year and a visit has been arranged for the 18th July for the normal reciprocal visit. The social scene is never dull in the Petanque section with a dozen or so social events already arranged for the remainder of the year which include a safari evening, autumn walk and annual presentation dinner. New members are always welcome but the section is actively seeking younger members. The game looks easy to someone watching, but it is a very tactical game. I am advised that petanque is an ideal sport for someone to move to once they have reached their peak in the more energetic sports!

Snooker – The 2008-09 season saw three Hartley teams in the Gravesend and District Snooker League. The 'A' team is aiming to go one better than last year by winning the Premier Division, being one point behind the leaders with three games in hand. Having topped the table for most of the season the 'B' team has won the First Division with two games to go. The 'C' team has struggled to find form this year and find themselves much lower down the First Division table. In-house snooker competitions are progressing well with the finals scheduled for 16th April.

Squash and racquetball continues to be played at the club. Racquetball seems to be being played more and more and an individual inter-club tournament has been started between clubs in the area.

Table tennis continues on Friday mornings and Monday evenings with members enjoying the exercise and friendly banter. There are no competitions, just the satisfaction of winning a game.

Tennis - Despite the wet summer the section had a successful season of tennis, with teams winning their leagues. The Club championship has been successfully resurrected and the section regularly organises American

Tournaments, which are a fun and social morning for all. Refurbishment of the courts will take place in April which will result in the section having six of the finest courts in Kent and South London, all located in one of the most picturesque locations. The junior section continues to thrive, led by our professional coach Jo Fitzpatrick. She runs hourly sessions on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday in late afternoons and early evenings, and there is mini tennis in the Hall. Teams are entered in the North Kent LTA leagues for Under 12, Under 14, Under 16 and Under 18 year olds. Knock-out tournaments are also arranged. In the holidays the coach arranges tennis camps. The section is actively seeking new adult members and would like to encourage Club members to give the game a try. It is great exercise and judging by the fact that some of the members are over 70 and still playing, proves tennis does help you keep fit.

Children in Sport – the Club continues to further its support in encouraging children to partake in sport. We currently have well over 200 children involved in the various sports. My thanks to all those who give their time so freely to train and support our junior sportsmen/sportswomen.

Smoking – Despite my request last year, members and their guests continue to smoke outside the hall entrance. I would reiterate that should you need to smoke you should do so on the rear patio and not under the verandah adjacent to the patio or outside the entrance to the main hall. Your assistance in ensuring that the front of the Club is not used as a smoking area would be much appreciated.

Christmas & New Year's Eve Festivities – NYE in the format of years gone by, of a black tie dinner and dance, was fully booked and a tremendous success. My thanks to those who were involved in the set up and who helped make the evening so enjoyable.

The **Christmas draw**, as always, was a great success. There are still some prizes to be collected; these are in the office and there is a list in the foyer. My thanks to Barbara Ellerby, Rita Bryce and Diane Bryant who shopped for the prizes and to Pat Walker who helped on the day.

Quiz Nights - in their new format have been a successful, with the hall being filled on each occasion. They are great fun, even if you don't win. Dates for the quizzes are on the Club's website, are noted on the email newsletter and on the table stands.

Club's website & mailshot – Did you know the Club's website contains a multitude of information: diary of events, sport section information, membership forms and hall booking forms? The Club continues to send a monthly mailshot to those members who have provided their email address. The mailshot contains details of organised events and specialist ales on sale during the month. If you would like to be included in the mailshot or have recently changed your address, please let us know your details – admin@hartleycountryclub.co.uk.

2010 – will be the Club's 75th anniversary. We will be celebrating this event with a day (and evening) of fun and laughter at the beginning of July. Further details will be made available nearer the time.

AGM – The Annual General Meeting this year will be on Friday 24th April, commencing at 8pm.

Finally, I would remind everyone that the Club's normal opening hours are 8.00 a.m. to midnight every day, except Sundays when we close at 11.30 p.m. Should you require administrative assistance the Administration Secretary is available from 8.00 a.m. until 2.00 p.m. each weekday.

I look forward to seeing you at the AGM.

Yours sincerely



Irene Everson