

HOLMER GREEN SPORTS ASSOCIATION

Co-Chairman's Report 2022-2023

Bob Asprey and Rob Shed were re-elected as Co-Chairmen at the AGM in January 2023. The operation of HGSA always seems to bring numerous challenges and 2023 was no exception, and the appointment of co-chairs has again been effective. We thank Laura, our Club Manager, and Sam, our Treasurer, for their hard work and commitment to HGSA. This continues to enable us to control costs and keep the books balanced.

Management

The Senior Management at HGSA has remained stable this year, with Laura Ripley as Club Manager and Samantha Lewin as Treasurer.

There have been several changes with regards to Bar Staff – Sue Walker, Yvonne Turner, Kai Drummond and Ben Thomas having left for a variety of reasons.

Beth Drummond has been promoted to Senior Bar Staff and Stephanie Copping has also joined the team this year under the same job title. Charlotte King and Marcus Monterio have joined the team quite recently as junior/trainee members.

A thank you to you all and to our longer standing staff Karen Owen, James Bailey and Lottie Norwood.

Mick Andrews continues to support HGSA, he is responsible for managing the bar operations.

Committee

During 2023 the Committee welcomed Lottie Norwood who represents the Cricket section after the resignation of Dan Little. This is the only change to the committee. For 2024 we would very much welcome new committee members, especially those who could support us with events.

Financial Challenges

Financial management at HGSA is never easy, as maintaining our infrastructure always requires money but our income is very seasonal. Bar takings haven't yet recovered to pre-Covid levels, but many costs have. As well as sport-related activities and established events, we must host new events which bring us more business and further raise the profile of HGSA locally as a flexible venue and a friendly bar. Some new events are indeed planned for 2024.

Facilities

During the year we have been able to replace our boilers with a far more effective single boiler. We have also upgraded our CCTV system, resurfaced the dancefloor, and had new flooring laid to the foyer and corridor. We have also purchased a new ice machine.

Due to the age of the clubhouse and grounds we continue to have other regular maintenance issues. Many of these issues have this year been attended to by John Ripley

again during 2023 on a voluntary basis. We are very grateful for his continued support of the Club.

During 2024 we need to look at the drainage of the toilets in the sports corridor, we would like to replace the entrance doors and get a mural onto the front face of the squash courts,

Our car park remains the biggest problem at HGSA, due to the daily wear and tear it receives. However, the cost to resurface is huge and far more than HGSA could ever afford. We have approached Buckinghamshire Council for support but to no avail. We are currently in talks with the local Community Board who might be able to help us in a small way, but we really need more support from a large funder or huge community commitment to the costly project.

Lease Extension

Chiltern District Council agreed to a 25-year extension of our lease in March 2020. The terms of the lease extension were practically agreed by 2022 but with the introduction of the conditions needed by the Football Foundation, who are funding most of the new pitch, and the complex issues raised by Little Missenden Parish Council (LMPC) in 2022 it meant a complete redraft of the Lease was the only real way forward. This we have now achieved but not without jumping through several hoops with Buckinghamshire Council in 2023. They have missed many deadlines and progress at times has been tortuous due to their apparent lack of resources. We did insist that the lease should be directly with Bucks and not with LMPC via a sub lease and this was finally agreed. The new lease has also, we believe, resolved the issue that LMPC had raised regarding the agreement with Padel Tennis to utilise the old tennis courts.

3G Football Pitch

2023 has been frustrating to say the least regarding the 3G. But the good news is that the two big issues that have been holding things up are almost behind us. It has taken 15-months, but we have been promised our Planning Permission any day now. It was due to be before Christmas but one of the senior planning officers had a family bereavement and was away from the office. Key reports from Environmental Health and Highways were received finally in November/December, almost a year late, but are positive towards the development so we don't anticipate any onerous conditions.

The delay has added to the cost to the new pitch such that the Football Foundation have asked for a review of the scheme once the Planning Permission is received. This could result in modifications to the scheme, but we still expect to get final approval later in 2024. There have been challenges in dealing with Buckinghamshire Council and this is despite support from Local County Councillors. We still have a gap in our share of the funding so the early part of the year we will be launching several fundraising initiatives.

Sections

Football:

The 2022-23 season was definitely the longest that can be remembered with the First Team starting their league campaign on 6th August 2022 and the U14's and U16's playing through to the last possible date in the season 26th May.

The First Team avoided relegation, for the second season in a row, with four wins in their last seven games ensuring survival in Spartan Division One. In the closed season we were switched, in a FA re-organisation of the football pyramid, to the Combined Counties League, which provides more local games and shorter travel. A poor start to the season saw a fifth managerial change in the last 18 months and encouraging signs are now being seen. As a parting shot from the Spartan South Midlands League, Holmer Green were awarded the RESPECT AND FAIR PLAY Division One award.

The Development Team finished last season with eight straight wins and have started this season in a steady fashion

The U18 Youth Team had a season to forget, with just one league win and three draws in a tough campaign but a close season managerial change has seen a lot stronger team this season, with more players making First and Development Team appearances.

The Senior Section also includes our Rangers XI, who play on Sunday mornings in the adult Wycombe Combination League and when at home use the bar quite extensively. Primarily made up of ex-junior players and friends wanting to continue their footballing journey outside of First and Development level football, last season was their third and was moderately successful. The start to this season has seen the team blossom though, unbeaten in the League so far and just one defeat, which came in the County Cup.

The Junior Section continues to thrive with record numbers of teams and players from U6 to U16 and encouraging numbers of girls taking part in dedicated sessions on Saturday mornings. The dedication and vigilance of Sam Lewin has ensured that all teams have the required number of sanctioned and qualified coaches and HGFC are a 2 Star FA Accredited Club.

Off the field the Chris Allen Masters and Junior Tournaments have both grown in size and provided much needed income and this year both competitions saw HGFC team win trophies.

Cricket:

2023 will go down as a mixed year for Holmer Green Cricket Club. In February, we lost our long-standing Chairman and former captain Luke Rickett, and Gin King, both to cancer. They are both sorely missed.

On a more positive note, the 1st XI embarked on a new era having gained promotion to Thames Valley Cricket League 4B, the highest level the club has ever played in. A very solid first year saw us very happy with a comfortable mid-table finish. The 1st XI also successfully defended their mid-week Knock-Out Twenty-Twenty trophy, beating Cadmore End at HGSA with good crowd, great pitch and immaculate surroundings. The 2nd XI and Sunday XI also enjoyed successful seasons with several juniors making their senior debuts. Despite some indifferent weather, our junior training continued to attract vast crowds to HGSA on a Friday evening, and it is exciting to see a handful of our juniors being selected for County teams.

Off the field we continue to be supported by a strong band of willing volunteers, for which I am extremely grateful.

Finally, and to end where I started, it was truly humbling to see a small village cricket club being able to raise £675 for the Royal Marsden Cancer Charity and over £2,000 for the Rennie Grove Peace Hospice, in memory of Luke and Gin this summer. A special effort by a special club. Roll on 2024 and some better weather!

Squash & Racketball:

HGSRC have retained membership numbers throughout 2023 with adult membership numbers around 120 and pleasingly junior numbers have increased. Three senior teams entered the 23/24 season. The juniors too have played some inter-club team squash, a good experience for when they may graduate to playing in the adult leagues.

The ladies' racketball section has a steady weekly attendance; Jackie Davidge periodically advertises for new members via Facebook which brings in new players.

The ManageMyMatch booking system is operating well despite some early teething troubles. In January 2023, the lights of court 1, the glass backed one, were upgraded to LEDs so that all courts are now equally well lit. This has made the club marginally more energy efficient and the tubes have a longer life; some minor redecoration took place at the same time. HGSRC have reduced court temperatures to reduce energy usage, also.

HGSRC are mindful that the court heating system may need replacement within the next three years so monies are being set aside for this.

Court fees were raised minimally with no increase in the base membership fee. HGSRC remains one of the cheapest clubs in Buckinghamshire at which to play squash/racketball.

Model Engineering:

HWMEC membership numbers increased slightly during 2023.

Our funds remain healthy thanks to the close control by our treasurer.

We ran four successful Public Running days on Sundays during the summer. These provide funds for our capital projects.

We entertained our usual two groups with train rides, children about 120 from Holmer Green First School & the autistic children from the Reading 'Engine Shed' group sponsored by Bucks Masons

& this year a new group Poppies Holmer Green Day Nursery.

Our big project has been the installation of picket fencing around the inside of our track to replace the tapes we've used for many years. This health & safety issue was brought about by incident in summer 2022 when a very young child crawled under the tapes and under the track supports – a potential accident, without its parents noticing. This should be complete in time for our May Public Running.

The area around the steaming bays was becoming quite dangerous underfoot and has been replaced using ready mixed concrete.

Padel Tennis:

Padel continues to be a growing game at HGSA as we strive to increase the awareness of what padel is in the local area, and how compatible it is to playing other ball sports as well as a great form of exercise.

Our coaching programme introduced over 350 new players to the game in 2023, with regular Monday and Wednesday evening new player sessions proving the biggest hit. We continued to give local people their first taste of padel with introductory and complimentary sessions, and are committed to these to give people the chance to see what Padel all is about.

We hosted half a dozen local and regional LTA Padel Tour events which were a great success with players from all over the UK coming to the club. As well as the Tour events there were several firsts including the first UK PADEL Junior Padel tour events, which was a series of four events bringing the best junior padel players to the club for competitions.

Building on the success of these events we hosted a range of open events for families to show what a good game for all the family is and how just like tennis and squash Padel is great for children to pick up quickly and enjoy, and we also introduced effectively free family membership for juniors when an adult joins and made the rates 50% less for juniors to book courts and social sessions, which we plan to continue into 2024.

Several players from the club represented the County at the first UK PADEL County Championships event which was hosted in Bristol, narrowly missing out on qualification for the Semi-finals. This was part of our commitment at UK PADEL to help grow the game and create new and exciting formats for players and spectators to enjoy.

Padel is now growing in the County with other local clubs starting to open clubs, this should set up some great inter county fixtures. The year has not been without its challenges with more rain fall than ever writing off multiple days of play (we think 8 days alone in November) and general challenges in updating the facilities. But we hope we can continue to spread the word on why some of the top footballers and sports players in the world are taking to padel as a great form of exercise and fun and look forward to seeing many new players on the court this year, everyone can give padel a try.

Dusty's Music Club:

It has been a steady year for attendance and numbers have been getting back to viable after the uncertainty of Covid and cost of living that makes people more choosy about who they come to see. However, with that in mind we have continued to try new bands to keep things fresh as well as booking established favourites. The investment in the HGSA interior and welcoming bar staff all helps to create an ongoing "value for money", enjoyable experience.

Events

The annual Beer & Music Festival was another huge success and funds raised as a result were spent on new flooring, upgraded CCTV and new boiler. We are already planning for the next one on Sunday 26th May 2024.

The joint Firework Night event with HGVS was even better this year than it was last year, with another 200 people attending. Saturday 2nd November 2024 is already in the diary for the event to be run outside again without access to the clubhouse and with HGSA running the outside bars.

Our popular Family Bingo Nights have continued to be great fundraisers for HGSA. 2023 marked the 10th year of Craig hosting these events for us and we can't thank him enough for the support he has shown to the club for the last decade.

Paint & Prosecco Nights have continued to prove popular, and we have also added a Wreath Making Workshop to the diary this year and already in diary for December 2024.

After a poll it appears that the local community are interested in a variety of different workshops to be hosted at HGSA, so for 2024 others will be booked.

Dusty's Music Club continues bi-weekly and sees a large variety of blues bands entertaining its regular members. We are most grateful to Dusty and Ronnie for their hard work arranging this live music and to the great variety of bands that come to HGSA.

Our fourth Soul Night in October proved as successful with still being very well received by our guests. For March 2024 we have already secured a UK Garage Night with 2 local DJ's and there is a large amount of interest for this event. We will also be looking at other live music options for 2024.

Foodie Friday's took place again this year and were quite successful, although again the weather ruined several of them once again sadly. We already have traders booked in for the summer of 2024, commencing on Friday 10th May until Friday 30th August 2024.

We are excited to welcome High Wycombe Hand Crafted to HGSA on Monday 26th August 2024. They will be hosting a Funday on the Bank Holiday Monday with lots of craft style trade stalls, bouncy castle and games. HGSA will be running the bar at the event and providing the venue for them.

Sadly, due to bad weather the HGVS Music on the Common event was cancelled but we hope to be involved if a 2024 one takes place.

Our clubhouse is available for private hire on Saturday evenings, Sundays (between 12noon-6pm) and some Friday evenings too.

Bob Asprey

Rob Shed