

Buckinghamshire Hockey Umpires Association

Secretary's report to the 2008 AGM

An interesting year. On top of learning the job and following on from a highly experienced and effective predecessor, the role of Secretary has changed during the last year, and is still evolving.

The biggest factor has been the adoption of our website. Communications in general are noticeably easier via the website, although there is always the danger of excluding those who do not have easy internet access.

Communicating appointments and contact details via the website seems to have proved highly popular with umpires and clubs, although only the Mens Appointments Secretary can comment on how it has affected his task.

During the past the Council has been very active.

This season we have had more members, especially those ladies and club games; more watchers and watchings; and made more and a wider range of appointments.

Over the last 15 months or so Simon Seabrook, together with Dave Tobin, spent a huge amount of time and energy researching alternatives, arguing their case within Council, negotiating with

TexSolutions, and then setting up and adding a large amount of data. Further facilities have been added to the website during the year, and you will see a few more at the beginning of next season. During the season he has shepherded umpires, clubs, counties and new members into using the system. And he has been making appointments.

Thank you for your cooperation in delaying your claims for expenses, often to the end of this season. This has made a big difference to our cash flow. Indeed, some members have only just drawn their expenses for the 2006/2007 (including our Treasurer), and several Council members have not claimed legitimate expenses not related to matches. Council made a number of economies which is why food was not offered at the excellent Dave Lennie talk in February. We have of course been ignoring fuel rises.

Particularly helpful was the South League grant of £1000 towards setting costs of the website that Mike Haymonds and Alec Graham secured.

Extensive efforts to persuade Buckinghamshire HA to join us in the website (and contribute towards the cost) failed. BHA have chosen to have a site of their own (see <http://www.buckshockey.co.uk/>). The Council believe they have missed an opportunity to provide a valuable tool for Bucks clubs, and to support their umpires association.

Andy Youl juggled health problems with renewed job pressures and guiding us through a tricky financial year.

Steve Marshall has worked hard at making umpiring kit available at very attractive prices to all our members, whether or not they take regular appointments. He has also actively explored ways in which we can improve our service to, increase our membership of, club umpires.

Lyn Turnbull, together with Andy Sparrow, has accelerated our drive to provide Level 1 courses. They plan to arrange a number of level 1 assessments before the start of 2008 leagues.

A Young Umpires Development policy is emerging in cooperation with Mark Jarvis on behalf of Oxfordshire HUA.

Apart from the Dave Lennie talk, the use again of the Oxfordshire Cup day for umpire training, watching proved highly successful and popular. Thanks to clever appointing and the very real efforts of a number of watchers (Alec Graham, David Jennie and our Level 2 umpires) throughout the season there have been more watchings than for many years.

Jim Patel and the Coaching and Selection committee have made a number of assessments based on watching reports.

One concern is the lack of representation of ladies games on Council. Mike Snell did attend a meeting to brief us on how ladies appointments in Bucks were communicated, but for the 2007/2008 season there were no pre-AGM nominations for Vice Chairman, Ladies Appointments Secretary, or Members involved mainly ladies games. (As Alec Graham will be elected unopposed as Chairman, the Vice Chairman is expected to be drawn from the ladies game). Nominations can be accepted from the floor at the AGM for these posts.

On the brighter side, we did appoint to girls and boys county games this year, often involving a catholic mix including umpires who do not normally take appointments from us.

For next season we aim to continue the development of existing and new members, to develop out umpires coaches, to increase the number of Level 1s in the county, to help develop club umpires, develop more young umpires, and to increase our membership.

Both the Oxfordshire and the Buckinghamshire Cup days will be used as training days to which club umpires will be invited.

Two nominees for Council are prepared to take on the newly-created roles of Membership Secretary and of Umpire Coaches Coordinator for next season.

Minutes of the 2007 AGM. Unfortunately these are not available. They were prepared by my predecessor some time ago but fell foul firstly of electronic transfer and then computer failure.

From memory, the key item was the decision was to commit BHUA to the effort and expense of adopting our website.

Roger Dobson
June 2008