

The 1890 Club Newsletter
March 2003.

Dear member,

I write with the healthy news that after another full year's activity the Club's membership now stands at 140 and is establishing itself as the obvious continuation of Oxbridge hockey when the idyll of student life finishes.

Summary of 2002/3

Varsity matches, Monday 3rd March

The venue was shifted to Southgate Hockey Club because of Wimbledon FC's impending purchase of the stadium at Milton Keynes. Also, the date was moved to the first Monday in March to allow the universities time to prepare for important BUSA matches on the Wednesday; how times change and how different are the priorities faced by the universities now! One advantage of the venue switch is that it is easier for London-based members to reach so it is hoped there will be a stronger 1890 Club presence in future years. There certainly was a good atmosphere and much wisdom being dispensed in the stands and on the balcony this year! The 1890 Club was represented with the traditional old Blues men's match at 10.30 and, for the first time, a women's match ran concurrently with the Schools match at 12.30 before the men's Varsity Match at 2.30 and the women's match at 4.30. There was also an 1890 Club article in the programme to increase awareness among current students, and the Club paid for some wine on tables at the post-match dinner to reinforce (or diminish?!) that awareness.

In the Varsity matches themselves, Oxford won both fixtures with the men holding on 3-2 despite conceding a late flick and the women winning 3-0. In both matches, the Oxford players seemed to have benefited from playing all their hockey on a water-based surface, whereas their Cambridge counterparts did not seem quite as comfortable. Whitgift and Uppingham drew the schools' match 2-2. Below are reports on the Old Blues matches so that you can see how you were represented by your peers!

Men's match (report by Tim Johnson, Oxford): – Cambridge 4 Oxford 3

An Oxford team drawn from several vintages played some thoroughly well-bred hockey, proving that age may wither fitness and flexibility, but not class. Unfortunately, Cambridge had not taken the concept of Old Blues as literally, and churlishly fielded a younger and fresher side, which from the outset required valiant defending from Chris Andrews, Andrew Minson and Axel Walther to repel the surging waves of Light Blue forwards Gareth Playfair, Tim Young and John Craven. With the defence shored up, opportunities were increasing at the other end. Mark Darbon's right wing foraging yielded several chances before one pass to Andy Kojima created the breakthrough. A second goal came shortly afterwards. From a messy short-corner, the ball fell to Tim Johnson and his goal-bound shot received the faintest of touches on the line from a strangely bearded Renwick Irvine, making the most of a rare opportunity to ply his trade up front.

2-0 at half time was well received by the growing Oxford crowds on the Southgate balcony, but before long the Cambridge supporters were in fuller voice as the lead was wiped out. Whether it was the introduction of substitute goalkeeper Nick Timpson or the wise words of skipper Chris Lawless, Oxford were left reeling as Cambridge turned the tables with four quick goals. Tim Young seized on an Oxford defensive error to begin the Cambridge fightback. Thierry Gruslin, who with Phil Outram dominated the midfield for most of the game, equalised with a firm flick into the bottom right corner. Jonathan Arscott grabbed the third, before good work on the right hand side led to a further Cambridge attack resulting in a Richard Beer trademark reverse stick shot, and Cambridge's fourth goal in fifteen minutes. With legs tiring on both sides, it was end to end

stuff in the last 10 minutes. Kojima continued to show unprecedented poise in front of goal, with a neat reverse stick finish to make it 4-3. A string of chances followed, and Tim Johnson and Will Kinder both drew crucial saves from the Cambridge keeper, Paddy Aldridge; Solid defending by Gareth Kenny and Robbie Hudson continued to keep Oxford at bay in the last ten minutes. As ever, any contest of this significance requires a great deal of effort to set-up, and thanks in particular go to captains John Craven (Cambridge) and Chris Lawless (Oxford).

Women's match (report by Vicky Griffiths and Emma Kirschen) Cambridge 2 Oxford 0

The inaugural 1890 Club Women's Old Blues match was of a high quality and the teams were well-matched. The majority of players were recent leavers, but it was also nice to see that Charlie Williams can still keep up with the youngsters, putting in a sterling performance at centre back for Oxford! Liz Fox and Verity King demonstrated just how to play in midfield and both Gemma Lowndes and Hannah Dent had superb matches in goal. Both teams had their moments, play switching from end to end with a number of penalty corners in each direction. From one of these, Liz Ellwood deftly slotted the ball between the Oxford defence to give Cambridge a 1:0 lead. Rebe Joyner coolly scored a second from open play; the final result 2:0. Rebecca Ridgway and Jacqueline Broers were nominated players of the match, receiving a bottle of Pol Roger champagne each for their efforts. Post-match, many stayed on to watch the Varsity matches proper and were given the honour and responsibility of voting on the girls' players of the match. All in all, an enjoyable day was had – what better excuse can there be for missing Monday at work? – and a long-overdue precedent set for future years.

Summer Hockey: matches were held at Battersea throughout the summer. The men's Varsity Match on 22nd May was a good contest but Oxford came out on top, winning 5-1, with Mark Hoskin (still playing National League hockey for Guildford) to the fore. In the double header against the Travellers on 13th June, the men were soundly beaten 4-1 by a side with a daunting amount of National League experience, but the vets were able to steal a game 3-2 despite fighting a rearguard action for much of the game, thanks largely to the wily skills and positioning of Mark Precious. There were also two mixed hockey encounters, a mixed six-a-side tournament played on 4th July using both Battersea pitches and the mixed Varsity Match itself on 30th May, which ended ending in a 6-3 win to Cambridge. On all such occasions, the 1890 Club picks up the pitch hire costs and organises a supper at the nearby Settle Inn, so these fixtures are fast becoming a mainstay of the Club's activities.

Matches against the Universities: although old boys from Cambridge have played against the University on the eve of Suicide Sunday for some time, this year was the first time that the fixture was brought under the 1890 umbrella and it was matched by the inaugural Oxford match on 22nd June. The Cambridge result was a positively extravagant 9-7 to the current students; names of key protagonists were not forthcoming, perhaps because there was mention of a bottle of port at half-time. Against Oxford the 1890 Club salvaged a 3-3 draw from 3-1 down against an almost full-strength Blues side. Special thanks to Mark Darbon, Paul Barker and Phil Atkinson for doing so much running on behalf of the older members. The day was a great chance to meet up with old friends, starting with long lunch, a good run around and then beers and a curry to follow. It is intended that these matches will become a regular part of the 1890 Club calendar.

Autumn drinks: on 24th October the 1890 Club put a sum of money behind the bar at the Old Bank, Fleet Street and paid for a buffet supper for this reunion. Numbers were slightly disappointing but this simply meant that those who did appear got full value for their membership subscription! It was generally agreed by those present that this format was successful as a means of getting the Club together on a regular basis as it did not involve vast outlay of members' money and allowed flexibility with numbers. It is hoped that word will spread better for the Spring drinks.

Membership

Any club is only as strong as its members, and the 1890 Club is no different. Because one of our major functions is to keep Oxbridge hockey players in touch with each other and to organise events at which old friends can meet up, we need to keep spreading the word about the Club's existence and expanding the membership. I enclose a list of current members; please encourage your team-mates to join up, or let us know of people whom we should contact about membership. We hope that the combination of summer hockey, a golf day, and drinks parties laid on in the coming months will offer something for everyone and make the £10 annual subscription good value for money.

Please also find enclosed the beginnings of a network of yeargroup representatives in each club. We would like these people will be responsible for publication of events to their peers and for drumming up a quorum of support from each era. If you are keen to take on this role, or know of somebody from your team who would be keen, please contact us. We now have a domain name, 1890club.com, so contacting members of the Committee by email should be more efficient (please see the addresses below).

Financial situation at the Universities

With sponsorship increasingly thin on the ground and central funds at the Universities ever harder to come by, both clubs are hoping to build up a strong relationship with their old members so that they can move towards financial security and independence. As a club with the long-term interests of Oxbridge hockey very much at its heart, the 1890 Club is investigating ways of helping the Universities to approach old members, though obviously not to the detriment of its current functions. It is likely that there will be further correspondence later in the year.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or any member of the Committee if you have any suggestions regarding the running of your club. I thank you for your continuing support and look forward to seeing you at an 1890 event in the coming year.

Yours,

Steffan Griffiths

UPCOMING EVENTS – PUT THEM IN YOUR DIARY!

Spring drinks party

Thursday, 1st May: 1890 drinks from 7pm in the Loop Bar, (19 Dering Street, London, W1R 9AA, near Oxford Circus. Tel: (020) 7493 1003).

Summer Hockey

Friday 16th May: 1890 Club men's Varsity Match (Battersea)

Thursday 5th June: 1890 Club men v Travellers (Battersea)

1890 vets v Travellers (Battersea)

Sat 7th/Sun 8th June: 1890 Club at mixed tournament (East Grinstead Hockey Club)

Saturday 14th June: 1890 Club v Cambridge (Cambridge)

Saturday 21st June: 1890 Club v Oxford (Oxford)

Thursday 3rd July: 1890 Club mixed tournament (Battersea)

Thursday 10th July: 1890 Club vets Varsity Match (Battersea)

Golf Day

Friday 19th September: Mill Ride Golf Club