

Chairman's Report – January 2021

Whilst the 2020 cricket season was without doubt the most challenging since I joined the Club in 1979, I am delighted to say that both the adult and juniors sections of the Club managed to achieve a great deal in a curtailed summer. At the time of writing I am not sure how much cricket we will manage to play in 2021 (although the vaccine should mean that a veterans team should be able to play a full season).

2020 started with Scott Currie, who first represented the Club as a very young lad and took the well trodden route from 4ths to 3rds to 2nds to the 1st XI, playing for England in the U19 World Cup in South Africa. Scott was also awarded a Hampshire contract, made his first class debut and dismissed Zak Crawley, a couple of weeks after he scored 268 for England, for a duck. Those of you who follow the England Ladies team might be interested to know that Katie George, who was in the England squad to face the West Indies but did not get to play, started her cricketing journey with Poole Town Cricket Club before moving out of the area at the age of 13.

It became apparent during February and March that due to Covid-19 we were not going to be able to play a normal season and it was a matter of waiting to see what the Government/ECB would allow us to do and when.

Before we were able to hit a ball in anger, the Club was faced with three hammer blows in the space of a short period:

- In early June we lost our President, Peter Dooker. We all owe Peter a debt of gratitude for the enormous amount of work which he performed for Poole Old Grammarians Cricket Club, the Poole Cricket Association and Poole Town Cricket Club for so many years. The enormous respect which both members and friends of the Club had for Peter was demonstrated by the wonderful testimonials which we received. Unfortunately we were not able to hold a memorial event for Peter in 2020;
- A couple of weeks later a large group of travellers occupied the cricket pitch in Poole Park for nearly a week. I am grateful that they did not damage the square and with considerable help from local residents and Council staff the rubbish which was left behind on the outfield and around the pavilion was cleared very quickly;
- We also became aware that, having been told by a senior cricket official (whose identity is unknown) that there would not be any cricket played in 2020, BCP Council announced that they would not be preparing grass wickets at any of the pitches which they maintained which included our two home grounds, Poole Park and Whitecliff. This would have been disastrous for the Club. Unfortunately there was nothing we could do at Whitecliff because the water supply to the square was broken but we did manage to reach an agreement with the Council which enabled cricket to be played on grass wickets in Poole Park.

During May and June it became apparent that junior cricket, initially in small groups, was likely to start before adult cricket and this indeed proved to be the case. As many of you will be aware our junior section has been based at Poole Grammar School for many years. Due to Covid-19 we took the decision that in the circumstances it would be inappropriate to use the School's facilities so we held all practices and, when they were allowed, junior matches (which were all friendlies as the league was suspended) at Poole Park and Whitecliff. We were faced with considerable health and safety challenges requiring PPE, hand sanitiser, ball wipes, social distancing and even some changes to the rules of cricket. What Joey Wormington and his team of coaches and managers managed to achieve in a curtailed summer was truly astonishing. We have some very talented juniors who I

hope you will hear about for many years and we almost certainly have the largest girls section in the County.

A day after Boris expressed concerns about the dangers presented by the cricket ball and cricket teas, adult cricket was given permission to resume. This enabled us to play some friendlies in July whilst a curtailed league season started in August. Some clubs chose not to enter the league at all, whilst others decided to field a reduced number of teams. Having originally decided to enter 4 teams, we stuck with that decision. Availability was excellent and on occasions we could probably have fielded a 5th team.

The league competition, which included some clubs who normally play in the Hampshire League, comprised of regional divisions of 6 teams each playing each other once, followed by a play-off whereby a team in the East would play against the team in the West who finished in the same position in the table. Our 1st XI had an identical playing record to Bournemouth 2nds in a group which also included Parley, Wimborne, Christchurch and Broadstone. As our game against Bournemouth 2nds had been rained off, the group winners were determined by net run rate and we pipped Bournemouth 2nds by the narrowest of margins. This resulted in a final against Dorchester – unfortunately we lost the game after a spectacular batting collapse by two wickets and missed the chance to be crowned County champions. The 3rds also finished top of their league but lost out to Marnhull 2nds in the play-off.

In order to extend the season a brand new 20 over competition was held in September. We entered two teams – one in a competition for 1st XIs, the other in a competition for everybody else who wanted to play. It was a knock-out competition and, despite some batting on occasions which you would never see in the Indian Premier League, each week both teams made their way through to the next round. We were due to play the finals on 4th October but the weather did not allow that to happen. We hope to play the finals (the 1st XI v Dorchester at home and the 2nd XI v Corfe Mullen away) at the beginning of this season.

So a season which could have been disastrous ended up having many positive aspects which I truly hope we are able to carry into 2021. We are delighted to announce that we have a three year sponsorship deal with BMI The Harbour Hospital covering both the adult and junior sections of the Club. We are very grateful for the support which we have received from PKF Francis Clark and our other sponsors over many years which we very much hope will continue.

Whether Covid-19 allows us to play a full season or not, the 2021 season will not quite be the same. Having started playing for the Club in 1975 Mark Allen has decided to hang up his boots whilst 2020 was the first year in over 40 years that Mike Talbot did not represent the Club. Our thoughts are with Gary Finlayson and his family. Gary was taken ill during a match in the summer and is now recovering.

Finally I would like to say a huge thank you to everybody who helped to make the 2020 season a great success in extremely challenging circumstances.

Nick