

# DEESIDE RAMBLERS

SEASON REVIEW  
2021-2022



Welcome to the Review of the 2021–22 season. It is 2 years since we were last able to publish the Review and the intervening period has, said with typical British understatement, been interesting! A lot has gone on, but I first want to thank the small group of people who have steered us through Covid-19, who got us back on the pitch when it was safe for us to do so, and who found interesting and imaginative ways of keeping us engaged in what our plans were going forward. Thank you, Lucy Woodside as club Covid Officer, Beth Alvey as Ms Sensible & Practical in getting things done, and Dickie Wallis who has the great capacity to make the complex, even government regulations, look relatively simple and straightforward so that we could plan with certainty. Well done team!!

After two years of disruption and the resulting challenges we could have done without the huge change programme that England Hockey chose to throw at us. New league structures, new regulations covering league hockey, a new administrative system (GMS), a stated intention to reshape junior hockey, and yet a further change to the talent development framework – the third iteration in the last 8 years. I often wonder if those sitting in Bisham Abbey creating a raft of change initiatives really understand the practical implications of grassroots execution of their initiatives.....

That said being Deeside Ramblers we have got on with the task at hand and have played our part in this most significant of change programmes. A particular thanks goes to Yvonne Meadows who was my partner in crime with the GMS implementation and Yvonne made many new friends with those on the GMS Support Desk as we worked through uploading of fixtures, player registration, match card preparation, and umpire registration to a system that was poorly designed, difficult to use, and where the technical implementation failed due to insufficient capacity and inadequate 'road-testing'. And it is going to be used for junior hockey next season!!!

So, in the background there has been a lot going on but let me now get back to the important stuff – playing hockey.

I start with the Ladies' section – wow, wow, wow – what a season!

The Ladies' 1s started off the season somewhat nervous of what might lie ahead – the league reorganisation meant they had achieved the equivalent of two promotions within the old structure. So they needed to step-up their game and achieve a consistency of performance which they certainly did remaining unbeaten until early February and by finishing fourth in the league. Fantastic.

To the Ladies' 2s. What a sequence of fine performances we have seen throughout the season with a rock-solid defense being married with an outstanding scoring record of nearly 4 goals per game. On the penultimate game of the season they were crowned league champions and at the end of the season remained undefeated. I believe Hannah Aldridge is still tallying her goals scored for the season. An Outstanding team performance.

The Ladies' 3s found themselves in the same division as the 2s – two teams from the same club in the same division is never easy but they have dug in, secured enough points to sit in a group of 4 clubs in the middle of the table. This is a young side with some exciting talent coming through who will be pushing for starting places higher up the club when it comes to next season.

The Ladies' 4s also had a great season, finished in 3rd place and are ready to push-on next season. The development pipeline is strong in the Ladies' section and, together with success in getting more senior players back to regular playing, we will be entering a 5th team in the league next season.

The story with the Men's section is patchier with player retirements from the top sides, some definite post-Covid changes in player's commitment to regular hockey, and the dynamics of the league reorganisation all making for a difficult season. Pre-pandemic we had been considering if we could sustain an 8th team. However, we are now going to have to try to understand the change in the 'commitment' dynamic as this is an important ingredient in any successful club and we need to do what we can to correct the current 'drift'.

However, there was also another feature of the season which I shall call 'the curse of the red x'. On a Monday night the selection committee meet, select the teams from the list of players making themselves available through Pitchero with the aim of producing squads with a minimum of 13 players. Each week this has been achieved – and then 'the curse of the red x' strikes. We realised that we would have Covid related withdrawals but we have been losing 10 or more additional players each week post-selection who decide for whatever reason they are now not available. There is too often no communication with team captains and Thursdays and Fridays have become a mad scramble to rebalance selection with 'phone calls and WhatsApp messages pinging about until late on the Friday night and I know of a few instances when the 'red x' appeared on a Saturday morning.

Too often we have ended up fielding a bare-11 against a full-strength opposition including subs, and with no consistency in who is in a particular side it makes playing a team sport pretty difficult. Please, please, please think and communicate – the 'red x' should be the last act and should serve to confirm you have communicated via 'phone or message. That said whilst many clubs have been folding teams and failing to fulfil fixtures, we have managed to get all our sides out each week and the club greatly appreciates the hard work from team captains and the selection committee in making this happen. The results on the pitch reflected this rocky road – the Men's 1s and 2s held on to their current league status, but only just, as did the 4s, 6s and 7s, but unfortunately the 3s and 5s were relegated. I will let the team captains tell their own stories in the pages that follow.

Sustaining the pipeline of talent development has always been a club strength and that continues to be the case with some 280 players aged 18 or under. Our 3 Badgers and Beavers teams have produced consistently strong results through the season – one stat that continues to impress me is that in October our Badgers and Beavers racked up 57 goals and only conceded 9. Feeding into Badgers and Beavers we have the outstanding work done by the Sunday morning crew and also players transitioning from Sunday to Monday evening. The strength of that is shown by the under-10 girls reaching the Northwest finals of the In2Hockey competition where they finished third and the under-12 boys winning the Northwest finals and they now progress to the National In2Hockey finals in early May.

I hope this overview gives you a shared sense of pride in what we do and the way in which we do it. As you read through the review it helps you appreciate the breadth of achievement and participation right across our 11 league teams, our three junior Saturday teams, our multiple cup teams, and with our junior members on a Sunday morning as they start their hockey journey.



F R O M

# THE CHAIRMAN

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But it doesn't happen without a lot of work, often unseen, almost always unheralded, but without which we would not be able to enjoy our game of hockey, in our own facilities, and in a safe environment. Our volunteers, just as much as the players, are the heartbeat of the club. Thank you to all who give up their time to make us the club we are. Thanks, in particular, to Alison Hill for the delicious team teas and refreshments – we get so many positive comments from visiting teams, officials, and spectators about the food we provide – and also for my personal supply of flapjack, and to David Pinnington, who has done a great job looking after the pitch and grounds amid some pretty awful weather conditions.

For long-term and sustainable performance success you need a consistent talent pipeline but what you do with that talent requires coaches and match day management including umpires. I would encourage all of you to think about how you might be able to contribute as a coach, as an umpire, or team manager, and then do something about it – courses are available throughout the summer via the EH website.

Beth Alvey and her Social Committee has breathed new life into the club's social programme post-Covid and I would ask you to support these and hopefully have some fun whilst doing it. Our focus is on fun but our events do also have a fundraising element to them as we seek to close out the financial blackhole of £25,000 created over the last two years and also pay for the new LED floodlights.

The 'Dawn-To-Dusk' hockey event will hopefully be as much fun as the first one was back in 1996, and this time 50% of the funds raised will go to the oncology unit at Alder Hey Children's Hospital, where the 2 year-old son of one of our players is receiving treatment. Lucy Woodside has already raised over £2,000, of which the entire sum will be going to Alder Hey, by running 5km every day of the month through February and I do hope that we can smash that incredible personal achievement with a real Deeside Ramblers collective effort.

So, enjoy the read about our season, reflect on what you can do for the club because each one of you is an equally-important part of our family, and enjoy our summer hockey programme.

Happy Rambling,

*Howard*

# LADIES







Having been handed a two-league promotion in the EH restructuring, we knew we would be in for a competitive season.

After some mixed results pre-season, we set off to Kendal for our first league game, securing a 2-1 victory and providing us with the confidence to go on a 14-game undefeated run. During this period, highlights included an away trip to Garstang, where we needed to give all our efforts to fight back (literally, as Alvey took a right hook to the face) to gain a point, along with some bloody knees from a very abrasive pitch, resulting in many players sporting knee bandages for the rest of the season!

We secured a draw away to Liverpool Sefton, however we were unlucky not to take all 3 points at the end after some excellent play from Smellie, who was taken to the ground by Sefton's helpless keeper before the umpire decided to make up his own rules.

November started with an away trip to Lancaster, where some foul weather lead to most of the team copying Titch and purchasing dry robes! On the pitch we battled the wind and rain to come away with a 2-1 victory, the second goal coming only seconds after the restart – it must have been something Mitch said at half time! November also brought a more local away trip to Bowdon which can only be described as a very contentious game, with Deeside earning a well-fought equaliser in the last seconds, scored by Meadows, who was also the player to take 5 minutes on the sidelines when Mitch got his first ever yellow card as a coach!

Next up was a 230-mile round-trip up the M6 to top-of-the-league Kirkby Stephen, who were the only other unbeaten team in the league – some would say a long way to go for a 0-0, but we were becoming drawing masters. With our first game of 2022 called off due to a frozen pitch, we started the year very much like the last, dominating the play away to bottom of the table Wilmslow, however only able to put a single goal past their goalkeeper from one of very few successful penalty corners (ask Titch for all the statistics – they don't make for comfortable reading!).

February brought our first league defeat, to Sefton, in what might have been our best team performance all season but for a couple of clinical moments from the opposition leaving us with a 2-0 loss.

Our heads weren't down for long and we quickly bounced back, taking all nine points from the next 3 games. A trip to the beach at Lytham brought a 3-0 win in some bleak weather, and Titch's papers making a guest appearance on the pitch mid-way through the game; it wasn't a day to build sandcastles. Lancaster at home saw the team without their regular goal keeper, cue Dutton stepping in and played a blinder, helping us to another 3-0 victory, with much help from the post.

**FUN FACT:** Grace is the only DRHC keeper to have a 100% clean sheet record!

Another journey north, this time to Longridge, saw the team battle against strong opposition, with Deeside finally getting the breakthrough and sharing the glory with goals coming from Smith, Pym, Craig and Diamond...a true team effort. Goalkeeper Capes won Player of the Match, keeping the score to a respectable 4-1 victory.

was a slightly disappointing end to what can only be described as a very successful season, taking just a single point from our final 4 games. Despite this, I'm incredibly proud of this squad who have shown resilience, endeavour and some quality hockey this season against some strong opposition and have finished a very respectable 4th in the league.

Big thanks yous to Mitch for all his hard work and dedication and hopefully we ladies haven't caused you too much trouble, to Titch for the constant enthusiasm and keeping Mitch under control on the side lines (as well as being taxi for our favourite umpire...), Beth for all the hard work you do behind the scenes to keep the Ladies Section being the strong force that it is, to the Steventons for their support and help at our home games, Ali Hill for supplying the post match teas (we've really enjoyed the addition of steak pies!) and of course the parents of our junior players who have covered a lot of miles this season, with some child care duties thrown in, and have had to watch us play in some not so decent weather!

Finally, best of luck to those leaving us this season (Esther, Elin, Katie, Maisie and Grace) – you will always be welcome back at the pigsty!

Player of the Season: Meg Stacpoole  
Most Improved U18 Player: Elin Faragher

*Alice Pym*





One of 4 teams fighting for the single automatic promotion place in Division 4 South, the Ladies 2nd XI clinched the title with a post-Christmas run which saw them drop only 2 points.

While Hannah Aldridge and Juliet Gordon provided the focal point of the team's attacking effort with 43 and 17 goals respectively, just as important was the fact that only 16 goals were conceded throughout the season.

Although there was a solid core of regulars, including several U18s playing their first season in the 2s, club life meant frequent adjustment as players moved up and down, so it was very much a squad achievement to finish the season undefeated with a record of:

P22 W19 D3 L0 F90 A16 PTS60.

A special mention must go to Amy Banim who, after several seasons starring in the 2s midfield, moves on with our best wishes. And welcome to a number of new club members including Grace Spender, Sarah Kay, our star GK Roisin Selby, and Hannah Aldridge.

We're looking forward to next season to build on all the work put in by coaches, managers, players and parents throughout 21/22.

Cara Booth



Following sporadic hockey over the previous season it was great to be back on the pitch and playing league hockey again. Historically, the Ladies 3rd XI has consisted of youngsters, but this year we've welcomed more returning adults and older- young players back from Uni etc. and have played an even mix of players across all ages. The younger players have thrived and developed over the season, whilst the more experienced girls and adults have added strength, stability and a great team spirit.

The new league structure put us in the same division as our Ladies 2nd XI, so we always knew there would be some strong competition. Our aim was to stay in the division and work for a mid-table finish... I'm pleased to report that we achieved both!

The highlight of the season was our away game against Cheshire Blues, who were sitting level with our Ladies 2s at the top of the table at the time and are a notoriously-hard team to play...the whole squad rose to the challenge and following a last minute goal from the ever-green Nicky Stammers, we defeated them 4-3, and rightly celebrated like champions!

Well done to the whole squad for a great season.

Player of the Season – Eliza Chesworth  
Most Improved U18 Player – Ellie Stammers

Lucy Cheshire





This season we found ourselves in the unusual position of having an excess of players which meant we weren't able to offer everyone as many games as we would have liked. This has led to the creation of the Ladies 5th team which will be entering into the league next year, enabling more women to enjoy regular match play. Those who stepped in for the occasional game played fantastically well and we're grateful for the value that they added to the team. With a very strong start to the season we found ourselves hovering around 1st and 2nd place at the Christmas break, and the dream of promotion was very much alive and all-consuming! A key highlight was beating Macclesfield 3s at home; a euphoric 2-1 victory secured in the last few minutes of the game, having trailed them 1-0 for over an hour. Unfortunately, after Christmas it all went a bit wrong! A couple of dropped points here and there meant it went down to the wire and with must-win matches away from home against Macclesfield 3s and Whitchurch 2s, sadly, it wasn't to be, and in both games we came away second best, which meant barring a major slip-up by the leaders, our hopes of promotion were over. However, we picked ourselves up with 3 double-figure victories in the closing stages of the season to finish the campaign a respectable 3rd place. Overall, a fantastic season with lots of fun and great hockey.

Special thanks to Georgia Morris for her support and her organising on occasion, to Beth and the rest of the ladies' organisers for all their help, and to James for training us every week! Thank you to all the umpires, and also to Ceri and Sue for your help in running the bench.

*Helen Thompson*

# MEN







It all started so well. An opening day 2-1 victory against Olton & West Warwick saw the men in black joint top of the table. The Omanis had arrived just in time for the game with no signs of jetlag, the umpires had disallowed a perfectly good Olton equalising goal, the sun was shining, and Josh Guy was spotted smiling in the changing room – all was good with the world.

A damn good hiding in the second game v Nottingham University was seen as a blip (well 8 blips actually), as 3 solid draws on the run saw us sitting comfortably in mid table. Thoughts of an easy ride were dashed however with 4 straight losses before the Christmas break – conceding 25 goals in the process.

Confidence was restored with a refresh of the backroom staff and a couple of friendly victories but it made no difference to our league form as we slipped to 2 more heavy defeats. We just needed to beat the other teams at the bottom and we would be safe – it was still in our own hands. Crucial games against fellow strugglers loomed. It took an overtime penalty corner goal from Paul Kroeze to earn a draw against Sheffield and two vintage drag flicks from Ali G to see off Birmingham Uni, bringing back memories of his many goals for Pakistan in the 1950s.

A win in the next game v bottom of the league Peterborough would pretty much see us safe – we lost. A win in the next game v Cardiff would pretty much see us safe – we lost. A win in the next game v Loughborough would pretty much see us safe – we lost (despite being 2-1 up with 7 minutes to play). A win in the next game v Cambridge would pretty much see us safe – we drew.

Fortunately, our 2 relegation buddies – Sheffield and Peterborough also drew keeping them 1 and 2 points behind us. A win in the last game would actually see us safe! But this was against Bowdon – at team we hadn't beaten since Mitch was at primary school. Thanks to 2 goals from local boy Rashad Al-Fazari and a save from Mack Heath we managed to sneak a 2-1 win. Sheffield and Peterborough also won – oh to be fly on the wall when they saw our result!

So in a sense it all finished well...?

Special thanks must go to James Pratt for leading the team so well and making the odd pass to a teammate. Other players worthy of a special mention are: Alex Lingham, for reminding us what its like to be a student with no cares in the world or any sense of responsibility; Doctor Dave McNally, for expert use of his famous 'Macca turn' and undignified way of falling over for no apparent reason; Andy Balmer, for his smooth transition from a defender to a forward and showing us he can't play there either; Freddie Cheshire, for his huge contribution in the Bowdon match (5 touches in the entire game); Harry Dodd-Moore, for spending so much time getting to grips with Pitchero; little Henry Jones, for general amusement value and finding an unusual way of getting his girlfriend to pay him more attention; Harpal Panesar, for his huge goal tally from penalty corners (2); Warwick Ryan-Beswick, for being there when we needed him; Neil Worrall, for showing us there is life after 40; Rob Way, for making the numbers up and sliding in when it mattered most; Pat Tenner, for his passionate little team talks in the changing rooms; and last but not least the Team Manager, without whom this report could have been written betterer.

*Jon Marshall*

As the mistress of understatement, Lady Whistledown notes that the 1s play in a tough league. In the South you play club sides (if you include Team Bath Buccaneers in that category); in the North you enter the semi-professional world of University hockey where half the teams play and train 4 or 5 times a week, with some players on scholarships and most of them supported by a whole range of facilities from nutrition, strength & conditioning, psychology, video analysis, and injury management. That said, we choose to play at this level and the best strategy is to just get on with it – but it is also good to remind ourselves of how well we do as a club to be competing at this level.

What we didn't plan for was a change of jockey halfway through the race. Never to be put off in the face of adversity, we asked Ali Ghazanfar to take over as head jockey with the redoubtable and indefatigable Andy Mitchell as head groom and stable lad. Changes were made to how we approached the game; we managed to secure a recruit or two and to bring some junior talent through, whilst the senior players played their part and showed real leadership.

Yes, we scraped through to safety, but in doing so we ended up regularly giving 5 or 6 U20s a great hockey experience that they can carry with them through their hockey careers. And even when the results on the pitch were against us it was noticeable that the players were sticking together; much of that is down to James Pratt as captain – he galvanised the troops, the players were confident in his leadership, and a number of umpires and match officials have commented how well he carried himself and kept control of the team.

From her observation point, Lady Whistledown notes that you can tell a lot about a group of people by how they interact even if things have not gone their way and the post-match gathering orchestrated by James Pratt and Macca showed just what a cohesive group of players they had become.





The Men's 2nd XI finished 10th in the North West Men's Premier League. The 2s followed the 1s as closely as they could - both finishing 3rd from bottom and both going into the final game of the season with relegation very much a possibility. The 1s did gain 1 more point than the 2s (14 to 13) but the 2s had 1 more win (4 to 3) and scored 2 more goals than the 1s (38 to 36) albeit in four more games. Where the 2 teams did differ was in the number of goals conceded - the 2s conceding 10 fewer goals (67 to 77) and also playing 4 more games - reflecting the ultra-defensive approach of coach Cocks?!

There was a dodgy moment following the 3-2 away win at Oxton on 3rd Feb when we thought we might finish in the top half. The senior players managed to pull us through though as they made sure we lost all 7 of the remaining games of the season. The 2s squad was a close-knit affair - only 32 players were used during the season. No one played every game - Birchall and Cocks played in 21 of the 22, Price in 19 and Allwood 18 (I don't know why he couldn't play the other 4 when he had a broken hand). No one else managed 75%. It's been great to work with such a lovely bunch of dedicated and committed athletes. The players made my job really easy - I can't remember a week when availability on Pitchero wasn't all complete ready for selection on a Monday. Everyone confirmed their selection within minutes of the teams being published. No one pulled at the last minute - except Cope, Daddo-Langlois, Dodd-Moore, Fearnall, Hayton, Lamont, Leonard, Millard-Smith, Price, Ryan-Beswick, Tenner and Ward. My Friday nights were free from worry. No issues with duplicate shirt numbers or me having to provide a shirt.

Now, a few special mentions need to be made...

Coach, Matt Cocks - for setting such a good example with sharing pitch time - he insisted on coming off for 2 minutes in every match, whether he needed the rest or not. And for making such a massive contribution to the team's biggest win of the season 4-0 away to Brooklands 3s;

Vice-Captain, Freddie Cheshire - commiserations on his 100% attendance being ruined by being periodically dropped to the 1s;

Captain, Ian Ward - for dealing calmly with misreading the start time of the Chester game. He arrived after the game had got under way but made absolutely no attempt to rush or hurry in any way;

Will Dodd-More - who stepped forward on a number of occasions to take the captain's armband when players were away on international duty (skiing). Never short of words of encouragement for opponents - particularly those he was marking. Swapping shorts during the game is apparently a big thing now?! Such a clean tackler as well;

Ben Lamont - a very popular chap inside and outside the club. He was invited to 12 weddings on a Saturday this season. When he was free to play he was happy to show the Formby teenagers how to rugby tackle opponents and was always on hand with positive advice on substitutions;

Bart Ryan-Beswick - another ever-present, apart from when he wasn't there. Master penalty stroke taker and fitness fanatic. It's been so nice to see you moving majestically round a hockey pitch again. Leading yellow card-collector (2);

George Cope - congratulations on being appointed as assistant gardener at Bowdon HC - they were very impressed with your efforts to keep the plants watered during that dry spell at 11.25 on 2nd April;

Tom Fearnall - who is he?

*Jon Marshall*

With 5 teams from the old North Premier Division present in the new Area Premier League this was always going to be a tough season with the aim being to consolidate ourselves at this level. Looking at the quality of the players potentially available for selection there was some reason to be optimistic. However, inconsistent availability immediately became evident and the lack of a significant core of players who were playing the majority of the time certainly contributed to what Lady Whistledown considers a season of relative underachievement against expectations.

Playing on the front foot with the emphasis on attack most games saw the creation of multiple scoring chances but the conversion rate was disappointing. Unfortunately, this proclivity to miss the target was allied with an inability to defend when it was needed resulting in a net goal difference of minus 29. With 7 games lost by a single goal Bill Shankly would not be pleased with the lack of strength through the middle - although this does also show that it is sometimes fine margins that can define a season and that improvement might be more straightforward than imagined.

It was however encouraging to see a number of junior players getting a chance to perform at this level. Liam Daddo-Langlois, Finn Leonard, Toby Morris, Joe Osborne, Ben Semple, and Jon Simpson all got experience of the required performance to compete at this level and that will stand them in good stead as their hockey careers develop. Notwithstanding the tough season on the pitch there was a good team spirit throughout the side and sales of Cheshire Cat were outstanding helped by a rock-solid contribution after training on a Tuesday.





This was a tough year across a number of the men's teams, no more so than for the M3's. It took until 13th November, 7 weeks into the season to score our first points. Injuries, sickness and some who quit playing games the night before meant that the team was inconsistent between weeks. We could never get started even though several times against opposing 1st teams and their travelling coaches we looked promising.

We had several ups and downs throughout the year...not marking and letting in weak goals, passing to their forwards, missing open goals...but also scoring points against midtable teams, holding the current top-of-the-league to a draw with 10 men by half time and the season came to an end with a win and a clean sheet, only our second clean sheet of the year and with Steve one of our strikers stepping in at centre back, nonetheless. Most importantly no matter what the result we had some great highlights. A green card to manager and fines chairman Jack for shrugging his shoulders. Nathan not being able to get into a car park as his car was so low. And Abhijay thinking our rearranged game against Buxton was at home rather than away so only turning up at half time.

This year a lot of results did not go our way, but we have always managed to keep morale high, even when there has been some questionable umpiring. Our position in the league doesn't reflect the talent and effort within the team. But we should take solace that we held our own several times against 1st teams who have always trained twice a week and record their games for weekly review.

Unofficial 3rd XI coach Steve Worrall has worked relentlessly to drive the team's performances all season while balancing the needs to make sure young and old players are having fun. Sometimes drowning in paperwork, he made sure players knew their roles and how to support each other throughout the game. But we should not forget to say thanks to Matt Cocks who also ran training in all weathers throughout the season, and Tom Leonard for captaining week in week out and having motivating words at half time. All these combined efforts could be seen when the team really pulled together in the final games securing most of our points and finishing second to bottom and hopefully our place in the league. With that and the season finished it doesn't feel all doom and gloom at Fortress Pigsty. There are talented youngsters within the 3's, most are future first team stars. One such player is larger-than-life Chris Hall, a midfielder who has excelled this year when he stepped up to the call. We have seen our Young Player of the Season, Barnaby Wallis, grow from timid child into a young adult and future leader, a move from defence to midfield showed the real star quality he has packaged away.

Our 'man of the season' only joined part way through due to wanting to play tennis for most of the year. Only playing part of the season still consistently netted Jacob Popplewell votes, his speed and aggression on the ball showed in every game and the award was thoroughly deserved. His presence pushed one of Deeside's old guards into defence, a place where PJ does not normally venture into. Those on the sidelines may have thought it strange but the man is Deeside through and through and will always have an 'all I have to give' attitude, but this was a tale of the season, players out of position without complaint and still fighting to help the team and club. On the flip side, Chris Howells was our DoS, the one who ended up with the most votes throughout the season. A title he did not enjoy receiving and it did not help at one game he received votes from everybody except himself, the title was probably more deserved to the people around him in defence, but it is easy to blame and vote for the goalkeeper.

Moving forward and looking to next year where hopefully we can keep people uninjured and away from the dreaded 'rona. If we continue with our end of season form, I still have no doubt that we will finish higher and show these first teams our true talent.

A special thanks to Howard and Stu who have umpired many of the games this year, sadly bribes and jibes couldn't make them signal our way even though I want it that way. And to the others that have blown, the numerous parents that have stood there supporting home and away and of course to the Hills in the kitchen, a huge thank you.

Finally, as long as you love me, I couldn't write this without one final game. Can anyone spot the 10 Backstreet Boys songs hidden in this report? First to highlight them wins a drink from the remaining fines money.

*Jack Hardman*





**IN 2022, A CRACK HOCKEY UNIT WAS ASKED BY A REVIEW EDITOR  
FOR A REPORT THEY DIDN'T WANT TO WRITE.**

**THESE MEN PROMPTLY IGNORED A MAXIMUM SECURITY INBOX  
AND ESCAPED TO THE CHESHIRE UNDERGROUND.**

**TODAY, STILL WANTED BY THE EXEC,  
THEY SURVIVE AS PLAYERS OF FORTUNE.**

**IF YOU NEED A REPORT,  
BUT NO ONE WANTS TO WRITE IT  
AND IF YOU CAN FIND THEM,  
MAYBE YOU CAN HIRE...**

# THE 4TH TEAM



After a shambolic league re-structure, the mighty 5s found ourselves in a league with 4 1st XIs and 4 2nd XIs. The only matched team 'in our league' was Alderley Edge 5s and we also shared the league with DRHC 4s. No traditional fixtures against Chester, Neston, Bebbington, Sefton, Mossley Hill or Oxton – or even the North Wales battalions who were no further away than the likes of Leigh and Macclesfield. All sadly missed.

Traditionally the 5th XI acts as the development squad for younger players graduating from Badgers. However, that was abandoned before the very first game of the season as there were so many adults missing higher up the club that almost all the juniors who should have played 5s started further up the club and never experienced the joys of 5th XI hockey. Relegation was arguably inevitable as there were very few games in which we were genuinely competitive – often being 3 or 4 nil down after 15 minutes. Most weeks saw at least one team going down by 8, 9 or 10 goals. We used more than 30 different players over the course of the season and the constant change in personnel and positions inevitably made for a weak start to most games. Even parking the bus, as we often did, playing 4-4-2 or even 4-5-1, could not hold back the baying hordes of opposition attackers. I suspect that these new leagues will take at least two more seasons to settle down and we can only hope that relegation to the same league as the 6th XI will actually bring weekend fixtures that we look forward to, as opposed to a form of torture to be endured. Look out Jeff – we's a comin' for you!

*Brian Tenner*





Yet another interesting season for the Men's 6th XI, but one in which we ultimately achieved our ambition and lived up to Yachtie's motto of "neither promoted nor relegated be". We ended up 6th out of the 11 teams finishing the season...perfect!

By my reckoning, we've turned out over 50 different players in our 20 matches and unfortunately, as grateful as I am to each and every one of them, I cannot give them all a shout. However, it would be remiss not to mention some individuals / groups for outstanding performances.

Firstly, the core team who've turned out week after week, consisting of Ed Cawthorne, Dickie Wallis, Matt Armstrong, Dougie Kinnear and Andy Lear. Also, Ben Thompson, Steve Thompson and Mitch Clarke who joined us later in the season and entirely coincidentally marked the period when the results began to move in our favour.

Mike Verity, who's philosophy of 'why go around the player when you can go through them' still seems to hold true despite his advancing years.

Isaac Deakin, who discarded the shackles of his goalie kit to rampage up and down the pitch with the vigour of an elephant in must.

Kian Lawlor, Will Mason, Dan Bowden and Guy Harland for stepping up and into the void when needed.

Chris Howells and Ben Kroeze for taking one for the club and playing well below their abilities and providing us with some unexpected victories.

All the young players that spent an all too brief period with us before accelerating up through the ranks – Oscar Wallis, Jack Nash, Francis Unett, Ben Chapman and Eddie Pytches, as well as the frighteningly-young but frighteningly-capable Badger graduates Rory Kinder, Henry Dawson, Cameron Moon and Ed Riley.

Also, Robin Dawson, for playing with significantly less toes than the average player, and finally, all the old(er) boys for turning out on at least one occasion and making each and almost every game so enjoyable – Mike Cope, Steve Cheshire, Tony Mullock, Pete Minshull, Rupert Gill, Phil Winward, Paul Hudson and Dave Cheshire.

I'm not sure who our top scorer was but I know it will almost certainly be claimed by Dougie Kinnear, whose Shinty heritage ensured he can strike the ball with any part of the stick and from any angle (well at least in his head he can).

On the team's behalf, I'd also like to thank all those who make this club work, most notably Howard, Psycho, Mitch and Dickie for their organisation, Alison and Sue for making DRHC top of the league for post-match teas with those fabulous pies, and Paul Kent and all those who have given their time to umpire us throughout the season.

*Jeff Clarke*





Despite there being a 2 and a half week gap between the end of the season and the print deadline for this year's review, the Men's 7th XI found it too much of a task to cobble together a few lines to summarise their season.

So, in the interests of impartiality, the editor decided it would only be fair for you, the reader, to finish the report on their behalf. Complete as (in)appropriate...

The Men's 7th XI got off to a \_\_\_\_\_ start, fielding a group of players best suited to \_\_\_\_\_. Their \_\_\_\_\_ to hit the target prompted questions from the spectators, who couldn't believe what they were watching. As the season wore on, incredible skill from \_\_\_\_\_ was offset by the raw incompetence of \_\_\_\_\_, whilst the tenacity shown by the tireless \_\_\_\_\_ made up for the appalling laziness exhibited by \_\_\_\_\_, traits few could argue with.

Christmas came and went, and as things kicked off again in January, it was clear for all to see how many mince pies \_\_\_\_\_ had enjoyed during the festive period. The liquid diet that \_\_\_\_\_ so heavily relied on appeared to be taking its toll, and despite some strong performances, the 7s eventually had to settle for a 10th-place finish.

\_\_\_\_\_ to everyone involved, with the exception of \_\_\_\_\_; It's been an absolute \_\_\_\_\_ playing with you all this year.



The Men's Over 40s were drawn against Brooklands in the first round. A half-time score of 3-3 reflected a great first 35 minutes, but only having 1 substitute punished us hard in the second half, as we eventually lost 10-3.

Into the plate we went, and with a bye in Round 2, thanks to Golborne who were unable to support the tie, we progressed to the third round and produced a fantastic display to record a handsome 6-0 victory against Kingswinford on a Friday evening under the lights at the pigsty. A hat-rick from Ali was the highlight of the match, which included fantastic performances from Geoff, Matty, Sam. It was great to have Ibbey back at the club netting some fantastic goals too.

For the Quarter Final, we were drawn away against last year's finalists, Didsbury Northern. Unfortunately with a depleted squad we fell short 3-2, beaten by the better team on the day.

Onto 2023, and with the inclusion of two new players breaching the 40's threshold, we'll certainly be able to strengthen the squad even further.

Thanks to all for the support, and to the players. Special call out to Freddie, Jack and Howard for whistle-blowing in the sporting manner.

*Andy Stammers*





So, here's the thing... it all started completely by chance. Not quite wrong place, wrong time, more like the attack of the Judean People's Front Suicide Squad. And so it was that in the exchange of casual pleasantries with Howard Green, this barmy thought crossed my mind, and out it came....

"Mr Chairman, do you think we ought to re-enter the Masters Over 50's competition next season?"

Reflective of the balmy sunny summer's day, our chairman paused before calmly pronouncing: "Congratulations Miles, you have got the job...!" With the prospects of escape on a level with a netted trout, I could only utter the same words exclaimed by Brian in the ending scene of that Monty Python Classic: "You silly Sod!"

August to the end of October seems an age away, but when your mind starts to focus, your casual disregard quickly erodes, and that irritating life fact kicks in, when time becomes non-linear...

So, with 2 days to go, Blind Panic had set in... From a rich resource of more than 50 eligible players, we had a squad of 8! We had 24 unavailable, 9 injured, and the remainder were out of contact. Some lateral thinking, heavy press-ganging and the dispatch of a Bath Chair to Warrington ensured by Sunday we had a team!

Those who romantically reflect on the memories of a childhood spent with long hot summers on a fluffy sandy beach with bucket and spade overlooking a shimmering haze of water beneath a deep blue sky, do not know the Lancashire coast! On this cold miserable wet day our intrepid team made its way. Following a lengthy chat in the timber clad changing room at Formby, we were eventually on familiar first name terms, and sure to follow would be a rough idea of positions. A lengthy battle ensued, and we finally fought our way the entire distance. 250 yards to be exact, that being the distance between clubhouse and pitch, and we were there, all 11 men in varying shades of retro Ramblers kit spanning four decades, ready to face the formidable Formby squad of 14 players, 2 coaches and at least one umpire...

Once more unto the breach dear friends...

But Actually! Amazingly! Wondrously! A hockey match broke out! We were out of the traps, not quite greyhounds in the slips, but we were straight at them!

5 minutes gone, 0-1 We were up!

Then 1-1, 2-1, 3-1 down, all in the blink of an eye.

But wait – Deeside, Short Corner – Goal! Doug Kinnear far post. 3-2

Then the moment which haunts me still...

A great attack by the midfield; Steve Worrall weaving, interchange, Tom Leonard into the D, Defence sucked in... The Ball breaks, Where's the Keeper? OPEN GOAL!

But then, what happens? He hit it wide!!

Oh ye of little faith! I didn't spend 6 years on the Fylde Coast to come out with (almost) nothing! As the ball worked its way two yards wide of the far post, the full fury of the Irish Sea kicked in, together with sudden attack of sand filled horizontal Spitfire rain, and the ball veered wildly, into the middle of the Goal: 3-3!! And so began the intense battle for Over 50's Top Scorer!

After this frenetic pace of hockey, the game surely couldn't continue through the second half the same way, and sure enough, understandably, the pace slowed somewhat, but still an exchange of goals brought the scores level to 4-4 and the dreaded threat of shuttles loomed. Not only had we neglected to consider who would take them, no-one knew what shuttles are! However before the thought expired, Controversy! 2 minutes to go, Short Corner, Formby!

Hotly disputed! What for Umpire? Defenders foot in the D! What foot?... Wait a minute; What Defender? No-one was in the D at the time! Sure enough, Goal! Formby 5 – Deeside 4 and that was it full time!

Cheers and Handshakes, What a Game! Unlucky... Well Played...

WHATS THIS?!! – A scuffle in the dug out.. Tempers, and Blood pressure, running high...! Players holding him back...! Very unsavoury behaviour...! – Sadly, after such a close game, the cards must come out.

But wait! There can't be any Cards!

It's the Umpire who is doing the threatening and being restrained!!



After that match, we took a long time to reflect and recover, and it was the topic of conversation for some weeks. What became quickly apparent however, was that everyone enjoyed the experience and was eager to follow through to the Plate (Tier 2) Competition into which we now descended.

After a month's break we then played Round 1 Part 1; Literally a game for all seasons, starting with sunshine, then wind and some rain, turning to sleet, and eventually snow, which by the second half had covered the pitch – match abandoned 2-0 up. Round 1 Part 2 – Didsbury Northern once again, of course. This time a good game well fought, Deeside 3- Didsbury 1.

Onto the Second Round, and then – by courtesy of a Bye – straight in to Round 3 – Last 16!

So, another home fixture; in January, now against Worcester. A very tight game, two well matched teams, very even. Deeside scoring in the second half, Worcester equalizing and then stale-mate – no-one wants to lose! Full Time!

By great forward thinking (by Worcester) it was mutually agreed before the game that a draw would be decided by flicks, not shuttles, and on the basis that only 3 people in our team had run the distance required to fulfil a shuttle in the entire game, it was without question the right decision!

Sadly, by one coat of paint short of perfection, Deeside retired from the competition, but heads were held high for a valiant effort throughout, and much enjoyment along the way, and some comfort to know we lost to the Quarter Finalists in the Cup and Semi-Finalists in the Plate Competition. Not bad at all for a completely new squad!

That intense Top Goal Scorer Competition referred to was hotly contested to the end, with a three way battle. The final tally saw Doug Kinnear and myself narrowly squeezed out by the top goal scorer, the full results as follows:

Kinnear	1 Goal
Lewis	1 Goal
Leonard	8 Goals

Final note – thanks to the entire squad for the unrelenting 100% effort of every player, including some who were bumped into dark territory – defenders playing midfield, and one forward playing so well in defence he was unable to escape from the position all season – sorry, but thank you, Angus! To Brocky, still running after the Duracell Bunny ran out of steam, and oh, Man of the Match – Tom Leonard! But truly, the great strength of the team came from its unity and spirit.

Hopefully as a team we can go that bit further next year!

My thanks to you all for your support.

*Miles Lewis*

# JUNIORS





## BADGERS

What a vintage crop of Badgers we've had this season...a lovely group of players who have gelled well on and off the pitch and played some excellent hockey. During the season we said goodbye to some Y9 Badgers as they took on the challenge of league hockey, and welcomed some Beavers ready to make the step up. In all, 30 girls and boys played for Badgers this season, inevitably mostly boys with so many girls playing in Ladies 4s and 5s now. We played 18 matches. Mostly, the Badgers won their matches and when they lost it was by the narrowest of margins, so they averaged an extremely impressive goal difference of +3.5 per match.

Why did they do so well? This year's group have been committed and have paid attention in training, then put into practice what Ali and Robbie have taught them. Plus, notwithstanding the very great skill possessed by a number of players, none of them insisted on individual glory; they were all unselfish team players and so got the results they deserved. Even though a youngish side, they played some beautiful hockey at times, best summed up by the Alderley Edge Badgers coach after a 10-0 defeat to DRHC, "That was a real demonstration of how to play team hockey – those boys and girls will go far if they keep that up."

My Players of the Season are:

·"Deadly in the D" attacker: Henry Dawson, for terrier-like determination and some spectacular goals;

·"Midfield dynamo": Ben Pold, for great skill and pace, and tireless work in midfield, supporting both his attack and defence;

·"Defender most annoying to the opposition": Ollie Kinder, for great tackling and game-changing breaks and passes out of defence to take the attack back to the opposition;

·"Stepping up": Milind Narsai-Latham, whose growing confidence earned him his place as regular 'top of the diamond'; a central strong figure in midfield this season showing leadership within the team;

·"All round commitment": Will Mason, our ever-cheerful goalkeeper who played every match, remained focussed even when he sometimes had little to do, helped coach the Beavers and is learning to umpire as well;

My thanks to Ali and Robbie for coaching; to Ja Nash, Charlotte Dawson, Sarah Kinder and Kev Honeysett for helping on Saturdays, and to all the other parents who have done teas and otherwise made my life easier!

*Dickie Wallis*

## BEAVERS

What a fantastic season it has been for our Beavers Section – it has been great to have a bit of normality back in our sporting lives with regular training on Monday evenings and matches most weekends. The level of commitment has been fantastic, with an average of fifty kids attending training on a weekly basis in all sorts of weather conditions. Each Saturday we have turned out at least one team and on many occasions two teams have played...great potential for the future of the club.

It's proved challenging to maintain all the fixtures, trying to provide managers, umpires and refreshment-providers. A big thank you to all parents who have helped out in some way to ensure the kids could play. The standard of hockey has continued to develop and improve week-on-week, something which couldn't be done without the expert coaching skills of Beth and Ali. It's so rewarding to see the culmination of the skills developed in training come through into matches.

In2Hockey Competitions

Our U12 Boys and Girls competed in the In2Hockey County tournaments at the beginning of February. The girls had solid performances against strong competition and were unlucky not to gain a place in the NW Finals.

The boys squad had clean sweeps in their pool games, defeated Chester in the semi-finals and came from behind to beat Timperley in the final. They progressed to the NW Finals at the beginning of April, where again they had convincing wins in all of their matches to become NW Champions. They progress to compete at the national finals in May, where we wish them all the very best of luck!

The squad comprises Arlo Curran (GK), Louis Hardstaff, Conor Hartley, Robbie Honeysett, Josh Hornby, Gus Jones, Braeden Mackenzie and Sammy Mason, and has been coached and managed by Russ Hornby.

Well done to all involved, and a big thank you to everyone who has helped out with the Beavers in any way throughout the season – without this help we wouldn't have such a thriving Beavers section.

*Nicky Stammers*

## U7

It's been a fantastic year of hockey for the youngest age group at the club. The numbers on Sunday mornings are a really good sign for the future. We have been really impressed by the skill and the enthusiasm shown; it was fantastic to see Deeside represented by three teams at the recent hockey festival at Caldby, with all teams having a great time and showing how good they are! A massive thank you to all the volunteer coaches and all those who run the Sunday morning sessions.

*Phil Coney*



## U10 GIRLS

We took a young and quite inexperienced squad to the Girls' U10 county tournament, but the team rose brilliantly to the challenge, winning every single match, including a semi-final against Chester, on the way to the final. Facing Alderley Edge in the final, nothing could divide the sides until a very late Alderley goal in extra-time, meaning we finished runners-up. This meant qualification for the North West finals where the girls again rose to the occasion, losing only one match on their way to finishing 3rd overall. Congratulations to each and every one of them who were an absolute credit to the club throughout.

More than half the squad are still eligible for this age group next year, so the future is bright!

*Sarah Innes*

## U14 GIRLS

What a season for the U14 Girls, getting to the EH Cup Quarter Finals, a success run down to lots of training, commitment from both players and parents (thank you taxis and motivators!), set piece focus, team camaraderie and real tenacity. Just 5 games saw the team develop from a narrow 3-1 defeat to the very strong combination of club sides from the Isle of man – through three straight wins in the plate competition – 6-0 vs Oxtun, most satisfying 2-1 win against Bowdon – a whopping 18-0 away at Wakefield averaging a goal every 3.5 minutes, and a narrow 2-1 defeat against a strong Timperley side who were almost completely thwarted by our tough and organised defensive line in the Quarter Final of the U14 Girls Tier 2 Plate.

Top scorers over the 5 games were goal machine Cesca Pattinson with 8, 6 for midfield magician Ellie Stammers, immediate impact newcomer from game two, Charlotte Critchley, with 4, stunning attacking runner right back Eleanor Williams with 3, 2 for gracefully-powerful Ava Hardstaff, and stellar captain (leading both on and off the pitch) Emmy Dancy, patient midfield/forward Hannah Walton, left midfield legend Sophie Hornby, even newer right mid wonder Sophie Bott from game three, and goal of the season from Chloe 'the smasher' Roberts (vs Bowdon) with 1 apiece. They couldn't have done this without the robustness of goalkeepers Daisey 'the Oooost' Seddon and Ninja-like reactions Nia Grisedale, then Harriet (the impossible-to-get-past) centre back Henry, lightning quick left back Mia Horne, most tenacious Natasha Cobb, every position Evie Parker and the ever-enthusiastic and Tigger-like Jasmine 'Jazzy' Wycherley.

Thank you too for the invaluable support from Andy Mitchell and Ali Ghazanfar for their oversight and guidance, Andy Stammers both coaching and umpiring, and the immaculate umpiring from Alison Cheshire and wonderful in other ways Jack Hardman. A real club effort, a joy to coach and a team that has gone further than any other U14 Girls side Deeside Ramblers have produced in recent times – the future looks very bright for the Ladies section of the club.

#GoGirls, and watch out Ladies 1s!

*Del Millard-Smith*

## U14 EH CUP

On 3rd October, a strong squad of Ramblers U14 boys travelled to Bowdon to play their first cup match of the season. Featuring in the Tier 1 cup competition, the boys knew they would face some strong opponents and had to give their best to progress. They moved well for each other during the match, linking up nicely and demonstrating excellent core skills. The strength of the defence, determination in midfield and firepower up front proved far too much for Bowdon, who were overpowered in every third. Running away with the game, Ramblers rotated players out of position to help ease the pain for Bowdon, but it was all too much and Ramblers reaped the rewards of a comfortable 13-0 victory to progress to the next round.

This was held on Halloween, on what must have been the wettest day of the year, many miles from home over in York. The start of the match was delayed due to a flooded pitch. The officials were minded to cancel the match, but a wasted round trip of around 6 hours didn't seem too attractive! After much brushing and a break in the deluge, the match was on! The opponents were clearly a more even match, but despite this, the Ramblers boys arguably had more of the play, inning fourteen short corners yet only managing to convert one of them. The York keeper played absolutely out of his skin and despite excellent play and some impressive attacks, finding the back of the net seemed almost impossible. York, on the other hand, got lucky a couple of times, caught the defence off guard and punished us for momentary lapses in concentration. Despite giving their best and playing some really super hockey, the York team came away victorious with a 5-3 win and Ramblers' short cup run came to an end. Despite this, they are clearly a very talented team with a bright future ahead of them.

*Jason Nash*

## U16 GIRLS

The Deeside U16 girls had a fantastic run this year in the England Hockey tournament. They were a mixed year group, consisting of girls ranging from Y9 to Y11 and playing some very strong opposition. The girls had two great results before Christmas, beating Stone 7-1 and then Wakefield 4-1. With a lucky bye in the next round, it was on to the Quarter Finals which saw us pitted against Belper. Up against a very strong team, the Deeside girls did brilliantly to hold off the Belper attack but inevitably our fantastic run of wins came to an end, but nevertheless, the girls were delighted to have got so far in the competition – well done!

*Sarah Roberts*







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