Chairman's Report 2017

2017 was my second year as Chairman of Brooklands Cricket Club. It has been a busy and enjoyable year and a reasonably successful one for the Club.

With the exception of the Veterans (who had a very strong year, finishing third in their league), the senior teams performed reasonably well, if unremarkably so. Our 1st XI finished a respectable (but still disappointing) 5th in the County League Division 2 (one place lower than last year). The 2nd XI improved substantially on last year's performance (when they just clung onto a place in the County League First Division), finishing 7th. My own team, the 3rd XI, finished 6th out of 12 in the new Cheshire Cricket League Division B East. The 4th XI also finished a creditable 5th in Division 1, following promotion to that league at the end of last year.

Across the board though, we suffered from poor availability this year. This often made fielding strong teams impossible and, in fact, made even fielding a 3rd or 4th team at all very difficult at times. James Robinson (4th XI captain), in particular, deserves great credit for twisting arms and managing to find 11 players most weeks. Improving weekend availability is clearly something we need to focus on for 2018, particularly since we are losing several regular players to parenting duties and risk losing others to university / exams.

Encouragingly for the future of the Club though, the junior teams continued in good health, thanks largely to the unfailing dedication of the junior committee and coaches, led by Gordon Cunliffe. Our new U9 coach, Ben Myddelton, seized the initiative and enrolled the Club in the ECB's new All Stars programme, while simultaneously managing to run the existing U9 team (which won 9 out of 13 games played) and organising a junior girls team (the 'Brooklands Bobcats'). The U11s had a solid season, finishing 4th, while the U13s won their zonal league and the U15s finished second and reached the cup semi-finals. The U18s finished third.

As I said last year though, the health of the Club cannot be judged only by results; what happens off the field is just as important to a club like ours. In this regard, I think we had another good year of social activities and the general atmosphere around the Club has been positive, save for the effects of the tragic death of our bar manager - Ish - which cast a shadow over the second part of the season. Ish was a newcomer to Brooklands but, in the short time he was with us, breathed new life into the bar and greatly improved the relationship between the bar and Club members. He personally supported me in bringing darts, table football and table tennis back to the bar after many years, even in the face of some resistance from the 'old guard' of the Sports Club! He will be sorely missed.

I said last year that one of my main aims as Chairman is to demolish barriers (real or perceived) between what some see as the 'junior' section and the 'senior' section of the Club. I continue to be encouraged by progress made in that direction, and it has been a particular pleasure to see the increased involvement of the U15s this year in weekend and other Club social activities during the summer. There is still much more we can do, though, to help every junior, parent and player see themselves as part of a bigger 'whole' rather than simply part of their own age-group or team. As such, I intend to do more next year to:

* encourage 'senior' players to assist with junior coaching;
* bring the whole Club together on the Pitchero selection / news system and move away from different platforms for different parts of the Club;
* encourage more supporters to attend games and spectate, including by promoting the use of the Club's new online calendar (which shows all fixtures for all teams across the Club, allowing members to add this to their smartphones and see, at a glance, who is playing where);
* form a 'junior committee' comprising 2 players from each junior side who will be able to meet with, and give their views and ideas to, the 'senior committee'.

Avid readers may note that some of these remain on my 'to do' list from last year. However, I will continue to pursue them. New ideas (and also volunteers to assist with the above) would also be warmly welcomed.

In concluding this report, I must record again that the success of the Club is entirely dependant upon the volunteers who run it. We continue to be very lucky to be blessed with an exceptionally dedicated and loyal base of players, parents, coaches and ex-players who have continued to contribute vast amounts of time and energy during 2017 to make the Club a success. I have been very fortunate, as Chairman, to be able to delegate to - and rely upon – key individuals who take responsibility for the important jobs which need to be done to keep the Club ticking along. I will not name individual names in this report for fear of missing someone off my list, but those who have contributed this year (many of whom have done so tirelessly for many years before it) will know that my thanks is directed towards them.

It remains my view, though, that some of our players (junior and senior) or parents of players continue to assume that the Club is a 'professionally run' organisation which is capable of looking after itself. We must all do more to ensure that everyone who 'uses' the Club knows and recognises how much hard-work it takes to make it look like things happen easily, and contributes themselves to making it a success.

**Andy Batty**
**September 2017**