Chairman's Report 2016

2016 was my first year as Chairman of Brooklands Cricket Club. It has been an interesting and enjoyable year and, I think, a reasonably successful one for the Club generally.

Our 1st XI finished 4th in the County League Division 2, our 2nd XI survived (just) in the County League First Division (finishing 10th) and our 3rd XI finished 9th out of 22 in the new Cheshire Cricket League Division B East (which ought to ensure a place in the top section of the new league next year). The veterans finished mid-table in their league. Our 4th XI was the most successful of our 'senior' teams though: winning Division 2 (East) of the County League and gaining promotion to Division 1 for 2017.

Just as important for the future health of the Club, our junior sides were also very successful. Our U9 side reached the semi final of the cup, while our U11s reached the final and won their league. The U14 side were also league winners and the U17s won the Cheshire Cup: a fantastic achievement.

Success however – particularly at our level of cricket – should not be judged only by results; but also by considering other, less obvious and less tangible criteria. While there is clearly a link between onfield success and the general atmosphere around the Club, it is my firm view that, in order to make Brooklands a great club to be part of, we need to focus as much on our people and the social side of our organisation as we do on our performances and results.

In this regard, one of my main aims as Chairman is to do what I can to bring about the demolition of barriers (real or perceived) between what some see as the 'junior' section and the 'senior' section of the Club. This year I think we have made some progress in this direction, in particular through the success of the Mission Statement which was adopted at the start of the year and which, for the first time, laid out in writing our plan for the development of junior players within the 1st-4th XI sides. There is much more still to be done however, particularly from a social/'socialising' perspective. To develop this theme in 2017, I intend to:

* increase the extent to which 'senior' players assist with junior coaching (in line with the requirements of our coaches);
* transfer all Club online activity (website, news dissemination, team selection, etc.) onto one, new system to be used by all;
* encourage more supporters to attend games and greater mixing of teams by developing an online calendar which will show 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;
* organise a Club-wide summer 'fun-day' attended by seniors and juniors and including games and entertainment which will appeal to all ages; and
* 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'.

Other ideas (and also volunteers to assist with the above) are, of course, warmly welcomed.

While there is always room for improvement though, I have spoken to many people this year who have commented on there being a real 'buzz' around the place this summer. Lots of things have probably contributed to this impression: on-field successes, the arrival of new players from other clubs and from other sections of our own Club (hockey in particular), an enthusiastic and likeable overseas player, a well organised press-officer and better use of social media, etc. Whatever the causes however, this atmosphere has been felt in real, tangible ways, particularly in the form of much improved availability across the senior sides. I am hopeful that we can maintain the momentum we have gathered in this direction into 2017.

In order to remain successful of course, we need volunteers. Fortunately, the Club is 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 2016 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.

I fear it is too easy for some of our players (junior and senior) or parents of players to look at the facilities we have at Brooklands, the efficiency with which our teams are (usually!) managed and the general ease with which things seem to get done and assume that the Club is really a 'professionally run' organisation which is capable of looking after itself. Some perhaps feel that their contribution to our Club need amount to nothing more than scoring some runs or taking some wickets then going home and turning up again for the next match. While it is testament to the exceptional efforts of those volunteers who make the Club work that there is room for some to adopt that approach, I feel there is more we need to do to convey to everyone who 'uses' the Club how much hard-work it takes to make it look like things happen easily. If we can get that message across even to just a handful of 'new' individuals in the coming year(s), the Club can only become more successful and a better place to be. Not only that, those new helpers will realise how much they can gain, personally, from being involved in and giving something back to the Club which has done so much for them.

**Andy Batty**
**September 2016**