

Dear Everyone,

I little thought 43 years ago when I first joined the UHC and Frank Norledge's dad was President, that I would still be a member! In that time I have captained the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> XIs, been Chairman of Selectors, Summer games organiser, (how else could I play with all those clever people of the 1<sup>st</sup> XI), Club Captain, founder of the Easter 7s and Secretary of the Pavilion Club, culminating in that ultimate honour of being elected your President 16 years ago.

The game has much changed, no longer do we roll the ball in from the touch line, off-side has been banished, raising the stick above one's head is permissible, providing no danger and the old obstruction rule now exchanged for something more complex; to see it in action watch the Club Captain, one of my 4<sup>th</sup> XI protégés aged 15/16. All games were on grass, only now experienced at the Easter 7s and on Boxing Day, and it was not unusual for almost half of the Season to be lost thorough bad weather. All games started then at either 2.15 pm or 2.30 pm on a Saturday, which meant everyone playing at Home came back to the Clubhouse for bangers and beans prepared by our wives, girlfriends or Mums. Subs were around £9 for over 18 and £2.50 for U18, match fee was 25p beer, money 30p and petrol money about the same. There were no Leagues, (Oh! Happy days!), and all teams played the same opposition, providing there was a compliment of teams.

But in all that time UHC has absorbed and met the challenges. It has grown stronger both in playing strength and financially, but not without much stress and commitment by so many members anxious for the Club to survive and succeed. It has had four great Chairmen in my time, John Dean, Eric Collier, Nick Williamson and today, Lester Farrant. Each had/has his own very individual, some might say idiosyncratic, style, but none differing in their willingness to go that extra mile in the interests of the Club despite the family and work pressures on them. On your behalf and for generations before you, I thank them for their leadership in good times and bad.

You will gather that in writing the above, I am extremely proud to have been a member of UHC, but none more so than in the past 16 years as your President. You honoured me on my election and overwhelmed me by the gift of a beautiful wine decanter presented at the Dinner & Dance. I have tried to serve you and the Club to the best of my ability and I hope that in some small measure I have been able to give back to it what it has so richly given to me.

I have stepped down because there comes a time for change, but I have done so in the knowledge that the Club is in very good hands and can face the future with confidence and with that great family spirit which has always been its greatest strength.

Good luck to each and every one of you both in your hockey, a game to be enjoyed above all things, and wherever life takes you.

Past El Pres