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**Alstonefield Cricket Club: Review of the Year 2019**

Jon Lane, Chair, February 2020

(with material by Andy Bray and Liam Duffy)

**People**

I have placed this section first because our relationships with each other form the most important feature of our Club. Without these personal bonds, we would just be some people who like playing cricket.

We were saddened by the untimely death of Brian Allen, a very popular local personality who was our Club Captain in its early years and cousin of our dear clubmate Richard.

This year our friends Ian Longdon, Dave Singleton and Dave Joyce stepped down from being members of our Club – we hope the latter will return from California soon to bring his cheery presence back into the team. Meanwhile we welcomed new Club members Arthur Hack and Stuart Hitch, both fine cricketers in their youth now enjoying a return to the game we all love. As 2020 starts, we also welcome Julie Richardson whom we believe to be our first woman member – the first of many, we hope.

I want to pay special tribute here to my predecessor as Chair, Ian Mackay. Ian led our Club with dynamism and integrity for many years and filled several vital roles in addition to that of Chair. He had to stand down from all those roles at short notice at the start of 2019 to care for his wife Sue Lake after her unlucky knee accident; we hope to see him back soon on the field of play. I also thank Steve King and Will Siddons who kindly took on the roles of Ground Coordinator and Fixtures Secretary at short notice.

Playing a game of cricket is the tip of an iceberg of work, undertaken mostly by the members of the Club Committee. During 2019 the Committee held three meetings to plan and be accountable for that work. Some of its members stood down by the year-end. I would like to thank Shahid Ali, Will Siddons and Neil Shotton for their service on the Committee; Shahid and Will have become vital members of the successful Ashbourne league team so unfortunately have less time available for our Club committee roles, while Neil will be continuing as our Events Management and Tickets Officer as a non-committee post.

Our special thanks go to Tony Spybey who has been the Treasurer of our Club for 14 years, since it restarted in this incarnation. Any organisation needs a stable financial basis to survive, and Tony has run our finances quietly and efficiently for this long time. To mark his retirement from the role, he was elected by acclaim as an Honorary Life Member (our second, after Peter Leason). We hope to tempt him out of retirement to wield a stylish bat occasionally.

**Awards for the 2019 season**

Highest batting average: Liam Duffy 41 (who also scored our highest score of 51\*)

followed by Ben King 25, Andy Bray 22 (who also shared our highest partnership of 70)

Lowest bowling average: Liam Duffy 13.5

followed by Ben King 21, Steve King 26

Most catches: Ben King 3

followed by Jordy Duffy, Liam Duffy, Harry Jones and Simon Smith 2

Most Ducks: Dave Joyce 4 (in 4 innings! Total runs 0 – surely a Club record?)

Lame Duck: Stuart Hitch for arriving at our indoor nets, modestly claiming not to be much good at either bowling or batting, actually turning out to be very good at both, then promptly pulling his hamstring so severely that it prevented him playing for the whole season.

Champagne Moment: Rob Handscombe for a superb diving runout when fielding the ball on his follow-through as a bowler during the close-won victory against Oakamoor. Honourable mentions for Henry Nye’s leg spin, Ben King’s catching and Steve King’s catching while standing on the boundary rope...

Clubman of the Year (our most prestigious award, given for contributions to the Club off the pitch): many other members have helped, but one stood out. Steve King for having unhesitatingly stepped forward to take on the role of Grounds Coordinator and dedicated huge amounts of time and energy to the role, resulting in maintaining the superb quality of the square that is so important for our credibility with other clubs.

**Match Results**

The headline figures are: played 10, won 3, lost 7, cancelled due to rain 4. Superficially that could seem a rather unsuccessful season on the field, but as all our members know there is much more to our Club than mere statistics. Fully supported by the Committee, our Captain has adopted an inclusive style of captaincy: to ensure that every player who turns out is given a good opportunity to exercise their skills whether in batting, bowling or fielding. That style puts the emphasis on the players rather than the results; in the short term it might lead to fewer wins but in the long term it nurtures and encourages the Club members of all levels of talent, which is far more important.

We aim to complement the manner of our playing by the superb quality of our wicket and the friendly atmosphere of our Club as a whole. We believe that the best indicator of a good match is whether our opponents have enjoyed playing it. To answer that, here are some unsolicited testimonials from our opponents this year:

“We always look forward to playing Alstonefield, it’s one of our friendly games where we never seem to struggle for player availability numbers. If only that was the case for most of the other Sunday fixtures”.

“We had fantastic feedback … from our side that had a lovely game against yourselves”.

“Thanks again for another great fixture this year! We always enjoy playing you guys and of course seeing your beautiful ground!”

To make up our teams this year we had our numbers swelled with the kind addition of a few guest players and in particular by the strong turnout from a group of keen and skilful junior players in the 11-13 age bracket: Aaron Joyce, Ali King, Henry Nye, James Smith and Max Coombes. I thank them and their parents for their participation in our matches this year. Our opponents welcomed them all and treated them with proper respect on the field of play. These young players are the future of our Club.