

NORTHAMPTON HOCKEY CLUB

The History of Northampton Lions

I cannot recall the precise year that the club started- possibly 1979 or 1980. I do, however, remember clearly when the idea occurred:

Ron Pilgrim, Tony Faulkner, Steve Riches and I had been playing for Corby for 2 or 3 years. Our final season with the club wasn't particularly enjoyable and on the last game we were relegated. Not a lot was said as we travelled back in Ron's car but we stopped outside my house and the question arose: "Where are going to play next season - there's not much point in travelling to Corby to train and play if we are in the bottom division?"

Ron, Steve and Tony did not want to return to the Saints so we sat in silence until someone chirped up as a joke that we could start our own club. After a while it didn't sound such a stupid idea so we all agreed to go away and find some more players. We held an open meeting at a pub in Gayton and to everyone's surprise we had enough for one team.



The next hurdle was to seek approval from the Northants H.A. but at a stormy meeting in the Birchfield Road clubhouse this was not forthcoming with two of the four County clubs voting against us. Ron Pilgrim was well connected in Midland hockey circles and he contacted them and permission was granted. During the first season I can recall the following names:

Ron Pilgrim, Tony Faulkner, Steve Riches, Ian Jobling, Simon Langley, Keith Turner, Raj Heer, Barry Walker, Mick O'Keefe, Steve Bowyer, Dave French, Colin Dexter and Pete Riches.

I think Simon, Keith and Raj had also played for the Saints and within a couple of years Ian Jobling left to join Saints (and later became Chairman at Saints).

We started off as Northampton Town Hockey Club, expanded to Northampton Town and South Northants, then Horton House H.C., and finished as Northampton Lions. Over the years we wandered from pub to club and back again, always wanting our own place but never achieving it. Once astro hockey arrived it was the death of the traditional hockey clubhouse anyway. Our homes were:

The Castle (St James), The tennis club opposite The Trumpet (on the Wellingborough Road), The Whitehills, The Jolly Crispin, Horton House, The Cock Hotel, Barratts Club, The George (Roade), Moulton College.

Over the years, home games were played at:

The Racecourse, Lings Forum, Roade School, Stantonbury Campus (Milton Keynes), Bablake School (Coventry), Kings Heath, Unity College, Moulton College

After nine pubs and eight different pitches it's good, at last, to be in one place at Moulton School with the facilities on site!

Written by Nigel Riches