



Northampton Saints Hockey Club

Season 2004-2005 www.saintshockey.org.uk

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Ladies



Ladies Section History

Club History (1887 - 1987)

1997 was the hundredth anniversary of Northampton Ladies Hockey Club affiliating to the All England Hockey Association. In 1998 Northampton Ladies successfully merged with Northampton Saints Hockey Club to form the largest hockey club in Northamptonshire. The new ladies section being called Northampton Saints Ladies.



Juniors



The earliest records of the club are minutes of Annual General Meetings from 1928, with the President, Mrs Ballion in the chair. We have also discovered minutes of committee meetings and account books since the 1960's and fixture cards since 1947. These, and some memories from some of the older club members, have been used to compile a view of some of the aspects of NLHC.

Match Venue and Refreshments

Between the 1920's and 1960's home matches were played on grass pitches on the racecourse, with accompanying spectators, dogs, prams, shoppers, rugby and football players.

Mens



In the early days, teas were provided for visiting teams in the racecourse pavilion using outside caterers, with the captain and vice captain acting as hostesses. By the mid 60's pitches and changing rooms had deteriorated, and the café teas were too expensive. Fortunately, it was reported to the committee in December '67 that the new girls school in Abington Vale was to have a red gra pitch. This included a youth centre to prepare teas together with changing rooms and showers. The club moved there in 1970 with the first XI playing on red gra and the 2nd XI playing on grass.

Mixed



Eventually in 1976 the club moved down the road to play at the High School playing fields in Billing road. The three sloping pitches were not of the highest standard and the club had to raid its funds to buy a roller for £765.

With the advent of astro turf and league hockey in the late 80's grass pitches were deemed no longer acceptable and the club began playing on the Kingsthorpe Upper School's astro turf pitch with refreshments taken at the Saints sports club in Birchfield road.

Uniforms and Equipment

In the 1920's players wore a Navy tunic with a Claret girdle, White shirt and Claret socks. In the 30's it was changed to Navy divided skirts and a Navy shirt with Claret collar.

By the 1950's the shirts had been changed to all Claret. In 1973 after a complete rethink the club turned to light blue shirts, claret skirts and socks. To complete the outfit a new club badge was designed, this badge was used right up until the merger with Northampton Saints.

Many players will be familiar with the old style sticks and canvas boots! These have now been replaced by expensive light; smaller carbon fibre reinforced sticks and special hockey boots.

One interesting anecdote going back to the 20's & 30's was the task of painting balls! Leather coated balls were used and these had to be painted with white paint. It took two days for the balls to be painted and dried and if a strict timetable was not adhered to then sometimes a match was started with a wet ball.

Matches

In the 1920's public transport was the most usual way of travelling to matches. Games at Wolverton and Bedford were reached by Train. Matches against Kettering, Wellingborough and Higham Ferrers were reached by United Counties buses followed by brisk walks through towns and fields.



By the 50's & 60's more players had their own cars and in 1968 it was decided car drivers would receive 6/- per gallon of fuel.

A glance at the fixture cards over the years shows that friendlies were repeated year after year. Most clubs ran two teams so that 1st & 2nd team traveled away together. Nowadays League matches dominate fixtures. Hockey has become serious!

Membership

Membership of the club was by no means automatic and great importance was attached to keeping the standard high. In 1933 it was agreed that future applications for membership should be by written request, should document previous hockey experience and should be put before the Annual General Meeting.

In the 20's and 30's the club ran a Thursday team. This was introduced to cater for club members who worked in banks and shops on Saturdays and had Thursday's afternoons off.

Schoolgirl membership was introduced in 1975. Previously, in 1966, the committee decided that schoolgirls should not be considered as members but should be called upon to play if there was a shortage of players. As a schoolgirl in the sixties it was one of the greatest honors to be called upon to play.

Social and Fundraising

The social side of the club started in the 50's and 60's with events being held at member's houses.

Later on the social activities were given impetus by the need to raise funds. Dances, barn dances, car rallies and jumble sales were organised with enthusiasm. For two or three seasons the club held joint dinner dances with Northampton Saints Hockey Club, these events were held at the Salon. Subsequent dinner dances were run at the Westone Moat House and were organised by Gill Goode and Karen Martin, sometimes attracting almost 80 people.

Finances

To play as a senior member of the club it would now cost you £ 75 and £ 9 per match. By comparison, in 1929 the annual subscription was increased to 15/6d and the match fee 1/6d. The match fee was only paid for away games with car drivers playing FOC. By 1939 subscriptions and match fees had been reduced to 5/- and 1/- respectively.

In 1961/2 the total expenditure for the season had risen to £111 with pitch hire £7/13s. By 1969 pitch hire had increased to £1/5s and two years later, after decimalisation, it had risen to £1.60. By 1967, and the following three seasons of deficits it was decided that we could only afford to give our visitors tea and biscuits.

In 1973, with oil prices rising, it was agreed that match fees should be paid for all matches (25p per match) and not just away games. Costs have risen steadily since the Midlands league was introduced and the club started playing on AstroTurf.

Successes

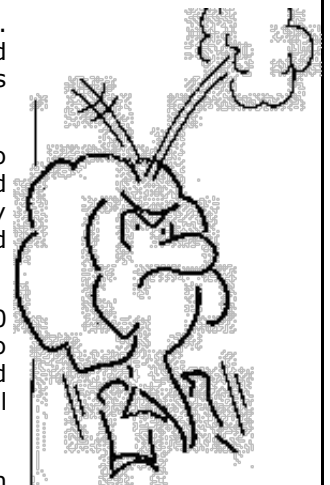
The club has had its fair share of both individual and team successes. Over the years many players have played at County, Midlands and England level. Other players have taken responsibility on the various Northants, Midlands and All England committees.

Edith Higgins was the first Northampton Ladies player we know to become a full England international. Majorie Pollard, when she retired from playing became an England selector. Also in the same era Mary Skinner, a talented artist, for many years drew the cartoons and pictures for 'The Hockey Field'

In 1949 Phyl Allinson was a newcomer to the England team and in 1950 played in the first hockey international at Wembley stadium. Phyl also selected for England, was for many years the president of Northants and of the Midland association and was also Vice president of the All England.

In the late fifties Joan Bradley who had been the Northants captain became an 'A' umpire and umpired international matches at Wembley. Judy Brown captained the England U23 team in 1969.

In 1980 Barbara Holden (Hambley) was chosen to play for England and GB. By 1983 Barbara had been joined in the England & GB teams by Karen Lobb, the club was so proud to have two internationals. Also in 1983, Linda Simpson, with immaculate white gloves, joined the ranks of the 'A' umpires – it was quite a year.



The following year Barbara Bean, who at the time was the NLHC president, became a full England selector. She was already the chairman of the Midlands and England U21 selection committees.

In the 1970's All England started the new club tournament. NLHC were one of a select band of clubs to reach the finals of both the first All England Indoor and outdoor club finals. The squad, led on each occasion by club Captain Val Sabin played at Crystal Palace in 1976 and Liverpool in 1977. Five years later, in 1982 the club made it to the All England club championship finals in Durham.

Although proud of its internationals many club members are proud possessors of the annual club awards which were first introduced in 1981.

In their first year as Northampton Saints Ladies, the club had double success, the 1st XI finishing as runners up in the Midlands Div B and the 2nd XI finishing as runners up in the Northants Div 2.