

Secretary's report 2016

Mr President, members,

Last year was always going to be a challenging one for the club on the field. Long standing captain Chris Ringham had stood down after nine years at the top and Steve Seymour had returned home to Oz.

It was therefore no surprise that the 1st XI faced a difficult campaign under returning skipper Jody Betts. Although this sadly resulted in relegation from Cambs Premier League Division 1 after a period of 14 seasons together with a couple of other relegations, we have had better years. However, it could easily have been different for the 1st XI if a few tight matches had gone the other way. Furthermore, it must be said the core of the 1st XI stuck together during the season in their battle to maintain 1st Division status.

The 2nd XI were relegated from Senior league Division 1, the 3rd XI finished third in Junior 3 North, while the 4th XI also suffered relegation from Junior League Division 5 North. On a positive note, the 3rd XI have just been promoted to Junior League 2 following some adjustments by the CCA management. On Sunday's the 1st XI enjoyed a much more fruitful season coming fourth in Rutland League Division 2, whilst the 2nd XI finished third in the Fenland Trophy.

Brighter news off the field came via a highly successful eleventh annual 3 Day Festival; an exciting new venture, the Talents and Favours evening, and in November the confirmation that a new double bay net facility will be erected at the pavilion end later this month. We owe a great debt to the perseverance of Fixture Secretary Pat Ringham and his hard working sub committee.

Returning to the main course and the Saturday 1st XI, they eventually finished eleventh of 12 in the Cambs League. They won only three matches against Saffron Walden 2nd XI, Histon and Burwell 2nd XI, although these statistics do not tell the whole story as the team featured the wrong side of several close games; losing to local rivals Wisbech by 15 runs and Warboys by 13 runs when both in decent positions, failed to prise the last Warboys wicket for 16 overs in the away game, had Burwell rocking at 57/6 in a rain affected game when looking like winners and lost by one wicket in their last game against Waresley. Different results in three or four of these games would most probably have meant survival for skipper Jody Betts and his team.

There were also heavy defeats, by 195 runs when Ramsey bowled them out for a paltry 50 and by 10 wickets against Foxton. In addition they got burned twice by former March player and first class performer Rob Woolley, who scored match-winning scores of 146 not out and 67 in the two encounters against the big spending Ketton. Nevertheless the core of the team remained available throughout the campaign in their battle against relegation which was good to see.

Runs wise they did rely heavily on young New Zealander Ash Vodnala and dashing opener David Hodson. Ash's Saturday tally was 716 runs at 35 which included five half centuries and a century (101) against Ketton, while David Hodson scored 527 runs. His exciting innings of 86 off 48 balls against Ramsey will be long remembered.

Freed from the pressures of captaincy, Chris Ringham took 30 wickets at a tidy average of 20 and a decent economy and alongside his battling qualities, he finished third in the batting averages, deservedly winning the 1st XI Player of the Year award (The Ian Bradshaw Shield). Off spinner Ash led the wicket tally with 38 wickets. Other young bowlers who warrant a mention are seamers Callum Young, who topped the Saturday averages with 21 wickets at 18 and Andrew Wright who took 16 wickets. Callum's figures included a five wicket haul against local rivals Wisbech in August.

Andrew's Saturday bowling and an aggregate of over 300 weekend runs for the 1st XI meant he was named the Most Improved Player of the Year donated by Nick Lowe.

Nineteen-year-old Toby Nulty, the officially elected vice captain embraced the role as leader of the Sunday side. His young squad enjoyed their first season back in Division 2 of the Rutland League after the constant recent rigours of Division 1 to finish fourth.

Ash Vodnala made the biggest impact with 773 runs at 64 as well as taking 36 wickets at just under 13 with the ball. His run tally included five half centuries and two hundreds against Oakham and Kings Keys, the latter in a memorable last game for the club. These combined feats meant that Ash was presented with the Sunday 1st XI Player of the Year Trophy (The Michael Wallis Trophy).

The rest of the runs were mainly shared between Toby, Ben Pyle, young Josh Fox and new signing Shaz Akhter who each had an aggregate of over 200 runs. Josh scored an amazing 86 not out in his own carefree way off only 53 balls batting at No9 against Corby!

But back to the young man from Auckland. In total Ash scored 1.489 runs at average of 46 and captured 74 wickets at only 16 with his tidy off spin. Aside from his cricketing prowess Ash was a very popular club member who was very much part of the club during his stay at The Avenue.

"I found March Town CC an absolute pleasure to be associated with, each and every member of the club made me feel welcome as the overseas player and I thoroughly enjoyed their company throughout the season. March Town CC has some outstanding facilities which I know the players certainly value and appreciate. On the field it was a frustrating season and had a few close games gone our way we would have certainly finished a lot higher up on the table. Although it was disappointing to be relegated from the Cambs League Division 1, I do feel that there is plenty of talent within the current squad as well as the younger players who are quickly coming through the ranks.

"The MTCC Cricket Festival and the MTCC Racenight's were a few of the real highlights during my time in March. I sincerely thank March Town CC for the lifelong memories and friendships that I will cherish for a long time."

The 2nd XI sadly ended their four year stay in Senior League Division 1 finishing bottom with only three victories from their 18 league fixtures. It was a tough season for skipper John Wallis, who struggled with his hip and lost the services of several key players from 2015 to the 1st XI.

Affectionately known as 'Dad's Army' like the 2015 Australian tourists, the last game against local rivals Chatteris featured seven players over the age of 49. After his autumn hip operation I know that John is hoping to lead a younger outfit in the forthcoming season.

Two players who did perform consistently with the bat were Steve Hinson and Rob Tombs with 553 and 360 runs respectively. Opener Steve brought back memories of his 1st XI days to deservedly win their Player of the Year award (The Pat Ringham Trophy). His final tally included a century against league winners Cambridge Granta 2nd XI in late July. Rob scored four half centuries which included powerful knocks of 83 against Godolphin and 94 against Buntingford.

Their leading bowler was Richard Green, who bagged 23 wickets while young left armer James Beresford and veteran Adrian Bussey

were the only others to make double figures with 16 and 14 respectively. But with Andrew Wright now a first team regular and James Fountain only able to bowl on two occasions, league matches took an all too familiar pattern as the attack was unable to remove the oppositions best batsman.

Skipper John struggled physically during the season but finished with a flourish scoring 55 not out and 63 in the last two games. We hope he will be back firing on all cylinders when the first league game comes around in early May.

Enthusiastically led by new skipper Anthony Henson the 3rd XI had a promising year winning eight of their 13 completed matches to finish third to narrowly miss out on promotion from Junior League Division 3 North. Subsequent recent events involving other clubs have meant they will now be playing in Division 2 North next season.

Their Player of the Year was 15-year-old Will Curtis (The Mel Pooley Shield) for his all round performances, tight bowling, often opening the attack alongside some vital contributions with the bat at crucial times.

Anthony Henson, Manuj Patel and Rob Conyard all scored match winning half centuries during the campaign, but undoubtedly the best individual display came from all rounder Jacob Gray. Against Haddenham in mid July Jacob struck 63 not out followed up by a remarkable spell of 5/14 off only 6 overs. A real Man of the Match performance!

One player who we hope will rejoin the regular ranks next season is former 3rd XI skipper Matt Hubbard, who in one of his fleeting seasonal performances of 2015, grabbed 5/29 in August against Willingham.

The 4th XI suffered relegation from Junior league Division 5 North winning only five of their 16 matches though they did have to concede three of their fixtures. Special mention does need to be given to Luke Fage, who took on the role of captain on the field in mid season. I am pleased to see Luke is now officially taking on the position for this season.

Luke received reliable support both on and off the field by veteran opening batsman and vice captain Denis Furnell, who made some useful runs including the highest individual score of 72 not out versus Longstanton Grasshoppers 2nd XI.

Opening bowler Sam Mason was awarded their Player of the Year trophy for his steady bowling each week. Dennis Furnell remarked "Sam was the most consistent player; he always turned out and was a great asset to the team. Sam also achieved his maiden half century in 2015 when he scored 59 against Ramsey in the Ernie Wool Trophy.

The Sunday 2nd XI side skippered by Jacob Gray for the second year had a very truncated season due to weather and cancellations. Although they were unable to retain the Fenland Trophy a third placed finish was a satisfactory return for the young development side.

Non junior and vice skipper Stephen Wallis headed the batting aggregate with 206 runs including two half centuries while the bowling relied upon a group of young seamers, Sam Mason, Charlie Revell, Will Curtis and Dan Waltham. Stephen was named their Player of the Year. (The Les Mills Trophy)

One player who made a big impression in the Sunday side was wicket keeper batsman Curtis Oldroyd who scored 162 runs in his six innings. 2015 saw Curtis move through the senior teams; he concluded his campaign behind the stumps for the Saturday 2nd XI and scored over 300 weekend runs in total. A fine achievement, which helped him become the Young Player of the Year (The Chris Littler Shield)

2015 saw the first March players to wear coloured clothing, a black number, which came about thanks to the sponsorship of Smurfit Kappa. The new kit was worn by the Crows in the Jaidka Cup and the Young Crows in the ECB's new national under 19 T20 competition. However, unlike the heights of last year the Crows went out in the group stages whilst the Young Crows, led by Toby Nulty lost their two completed games. It did though bring a fresh outlook to the club in this burgeoning Twenty/20 age and hopefully next season will more successful on the field.

Keeping on the junior theme the club again fielded sides at under 11, 13 and 15 for boys.

Their respective players of the year were as follows;

Boys

Under 11

Batsman – Jenson Carpenter

Bowler – Daniel Bradshaw

Manager's award – Rebecca Moy

Under 13

Batsman – Dylan Rowlett

Bowler – Chris Howsam

Manager's award – Harry Gowler

Under 15

Batsman – Will Curtis

Bowler – Charlie Revel

Manager's award – Rob Conyard

Finished 2nd in the league - winning 7 out of 10 matches.

Rob Conyard and Will Curtis scored four and three undefeated half centuries respectively during the season.

The Trophies were presented to the winners by Junior Section Chairman Norman Alterton at their presentation evening in late July.

The Avenue hosted both an under 17s and under 12s county boys' match and county matches at both under 13 and under 17 are planned for the forthcoming season.

In addition the club hosted two Kwik cricket festivals in May and June respectively.

Ash Vodnala, Bill Adamson, Pat Ringham, Emma Alterton (U11 Manager), Jenny Lambert, Toby Nulty (U13 Manager), Bill Crumly (U15 Manager), Lewis Welcher, John Wallis and Stuart Mills all helped the club with winter and summer nets for which we are very grateful.

The new double bay nets will greatly assist the work of all our coaches and we hope it will generate additional enthusiasm from the local youngsters who are vital to the future of this club.

This year's 3 Day Festival proved to be the most successful ever. The event was fully booked with 120 local boys and girls aged between 6 and 12 years enjoying the variety of activities.

Planning for the three days in July begins months in advance and for that I would like to thank Les Mills for his administration skills and for arranging the important sponsorship packages, the coaching team of Bill Adamson, Stuart Mills, Ash Vodnala and Toby Nulty, the catering team of Helen Foad, Lesley Knaves, Tony Knaves and Hayley Bradshaw and first aider Carol Gaskin. Without them alongside the many junior players who help the coaches the event would not be possible.

Chairman Les Mills and Fixture Secretary Pat Ringham both received county recognition in the form of outstanding services to cricket awards last year. Les won the leagues and boards award while Pat was successful in the Lifetime achiever category.

The support and involvement of March Boxing Club, March Athletic Club, March Soccer School, Peterborough Hockey Club, the FDC Community bus and the local Police all helped make it a special three days for the children.

We must also thank last year's Festival sponsors the Big Lottery, Fenland District Council, Fenland Youth District Council, Fenmarc, Fruit Bowl plus Fenland District Council Sports Development Staff member Jon Gipson.

Festival Awards 2015 – Presented by club Chairman Les Mills at the close of the event were awarded to;

Bob Terry Trophy – Ben Jupp
Greg Ward Trophy – Aimee Bannon
Cliff Pearce Trophy - Jesse Cowles
HMP Whitemoor Trophy - Caden Bradshaw

The club continued to be a part of the ECB initiative for schools "Chance to Shine" where Ash Vodnala and Bill Adamson spent many hours enthusiastically coaching local youngsters. We are delighted to confirm the club are to remain part of this worthy project in 2016.

Twitter via @marchtowncc was added to our armoury of cricket information. Our new social media outlet greatly enhanced the instant match day news of the Saturday 1st XI. Twitter also highlighted the skills of 1st XI scorer Norman Topliss who was able to transmit instant scores across social media for members and local press. The new link also provided an outlet for Pat Ringham to showcase his photography expertise which regularly provided snaps for the local press. Pat continued to be kept busy delivering more detailed cricket news on the club website (www.marchtowncricket.com) whilst Facebook provided valuable snippets of news from The Avenue both on and off the field.

The ground team led by our resident grounds expert, the ECB County pitch advisor Mel Pooley worked hard throughout the year and we appear to have now seen the back of the crows, or the chafer grub as our expert reminded me. His team comprised

Malcolm Southwell, John West, Barry Short, Bill Ransom, Bill Crumly and Phil Readman who all concentrated on their own specific tasks.

Bill Crumly undertook the role as groundsman at Doddington where the 3rd XI and 4th XI now play their home matches. A big responsibility, which he has taken in his stride. Thank you Bill.

Phil Readman worked tirelessly on the square preparing the pitches for the high volume of cricket played at The Avenue. Like his fellow ground colleagues this work is all done on a voluntary basis. For his dedication throughout the summer Phil was awarded the Club Person of the Year trophy.

Cambridgeshire secured an 80 run victory in their Minor County match against Suffolk in July. 2016 will unfortunately not see a three day match at the Avenue but two one day matches in late April and Mid May against Norfolk and Lincolnshire respectively are on the cricketing menu.

Keeping up the county theme Richard Green in his third season for the side appeared in all of Cambs over 50s seven league fixtures, but unfortunately the county side only won two matches.

John Gilson (playing as an under-aged player) joined the stalwarts Pat Ringham and Stuart Arnold in the Cambs/Hunts Over 60s 1st XI, who started the season in sensational form and at one stage topped the Eastern Division. They finally qualified for the last 16 play-offs in fourth position. Their trip to Somerset in the knock-out stages never took place due to a complete week of rain.

Stuart took 24 wickets during the campaign, including 6/18 in the win against Suffolk, while Pat hit an unbeaten 39 in the last ball win over Norfolk at Chatteris.

Dennis Furnell made seven appearances for the Over 60s 2nd XI, who enjoyed a highly successful season.

However, without doubt the highlight of their season was the match against the touring Australian over 60s XI. The Aussie's won by a convincing 159-run margin here at The Avenue ground in June - a match which attracted a good number of spectators and a great deal of publicity for the club. Pat should be especially thanked for his role in helping to bring this prestigious game to The Avenue and I know from emails received after the game how much the Aussies enjoyed the club's hospitality.

Off the field the most important area of the club, the bar saw Nick Lowe continue as Bar Chairman. Nick oversees a willing band of helpers who like him serve behind the bar, Graham and Linda Smart, Mike Wallis, Les Mills, Francis Gaimster, Gary Nicholls and Matthew Vail. In addition Nick orders the beer and cleans the pipes each week. Another volunteer who assist the bar committee on a regular basis is Norman Alerton who make frequent trips to the cash and carry. As a club we would find it very difficult without the dedication of Nick, his team and Norman. Keeping them all on their toes is our long standing Treasurer and President Alan Day who continues to work many hours for the club.

The Social Committee arranged and promoted a range of events for the members, which regrettably at times were not well supported by the membership.

The Social Committee are very open to new ideas and if any member would like to join them please let us know. Staging events for all types of members and age groups is important, but to do that we need an engaging membership with some innovative ideas. One such event was the casino evening which we hope to stage again this year. The chance to see Chris 007 Ringham in his suit at the card table again should be worth watching.

The 2nd annual golf day was won by George Campbell who was part of the winning team with Phil Skeels and Bill Ransom.

Successful evenings included the two race nights and the Twenty/20 match and barbecue. Indeed it was fantastic to see so many of the stars of yesteryear like former skipper Gary Chapman playing on the night, and facing his son Carl's bowling along with former prolific 1st XI opening bat Colin Nuttall enjoying a few pints with old colleagues at the bar. Thanks should also be recorded to Terry Hunt for his work as promoter of the 10 week draw.

Former England off spinner Robert Croft has also just entertained us at the annual club dinner, the 30th dinner since the event was established back in 1987.

Sunday lunches in the winter months have been well attended and the pool and domino teams continue to play regular league matches at the club.

However, probably the biggest event of the social calendar was the Talents and Favours evening held in early May. In close partnership with the Hockey Club an amazing sum of just over £3,000 was raised thanks to the generosity of club members from both sections

either donating prizes or favours. We must not forget the part played by our resident auctioneer, club captain and raconteur Jody Betts who helped cajole as much money as possible from the variety of sixty four lots which were on offer. I am sure some members went home wondering how they paid such and such a figure to play golf with Les Mills or have a fielding class with Tommy Howgego.

The club is pleased to support the local community by playing host to Age Concern group every Tuesday while March Town Athletic Football Club Boys & Girls football teams play at the ground when the cricket season finishes. In addition Helen Foad organised a charity quiz evening in February when £310 was raised for the Friends of Knights End Nature Reserve and club's PA system. Meanwhile Ash provided some cricket coaching for FACET which was very well received by their members.

We are very grateful to the backing we receive from our many sponsors our main club sponsor Maxey Grounds and Co, match day sponsors, advertising board sponsors and the brewery Charles Wells who provide the financial support for the annual fixture card. On a smaller scale we must not forget all those many match ball donors who willingly give up their twenty pounds after being chased by our ever enthusiastic Club Chairman Les Mills.

The Michelin starred Norico Bay Hotel provided wonderful local surroundings for Ash Vodnala our overseas player. I understand cordon bleu dishes were part of the six month package as well as a full laundry service. Joking aside we are very grateful to Les for hosting Ash for the whole season.

The club held an Open day sponsored by Waitrose, an ECB initiative on the same day as our annual President's XI versus Chairman's XI. Whilst the weather completely spoiled the match we were able to formally declare open our new patio doors and windows courtesy of a grant from WREN. Close friends of the late life member George Granger, Mr and Mrs Suttle attended the day to officially unveil the new club flag on the scoreboard, the cost of the bright maroon flag with the club crest having been paid for by a donation from money raised at George's funeral earlier in the year.

On a sad note Nigel Read our former Committee member passed away in May. Nigel gave great service on the Committee between 2004 and 2011, especially when a very active member of the bar committee.

The fall in playing numbers identified by the ECB in 2014 sadly affected our club in 2015 as were we forced to cancel a few games. Rightly, I think we have decided to keep our 4th XI going and I firmly believe that new skipper Luke Fage will work hard to ensure we continue to encourage young players and fulfil all our fixtures.

For the 1st XI, 2016 is an important season as with a new captaincy team of skipper Tyler Phillips and vice captain James Harradine in their quest to regain Cambs Premier League Division 1 status. To help them achieve this aim all the team captains need the regular commitment of the players. With new double bay nets no longer just a dream but almost a reality we now have the cricketing facilities to hopefully encourage young players to move to the club and for the existing players to focus on improving their skills.

As a club thanks to the voluntary work of so many people we offer a friendly and safe environment for young people. However, I did mention last year that the Committee need to continue to engage with the all sections of the membership and I believe that remains the case. It would be much appreciated if more parents could get involved with helping the club. We always need umpires, scorers and tea ladies so don't hesitate to put your name forward. Social wise we need to look at the changing trends to arrange functions which attract and involve more of the younger players. Hopefully we can address these areas in 2016.

The trio of Emma Alerton, Helen Foad and Catherine Henshaw have decided to stand down from this year's Committee and I would like to thank them each for their support over the past few years. It is good to know that despite no longer being on the Committee that all of them are proposing to continue assisting the club. I would also like to wish their replacements Tara Nulty, Sarah Lambert and Nathan Oliver good luck as they shortly join the Committee.

Finally, on a personal level I would like to give special thanks to my father Michael Wallis who has decided to stand down from the Committee. Checking the old minute books I believe he first joined the Committee back on 12 March 1957 at the Annual General Meeting held at the Griffin Hotel where 27 members were present. After leaving the Committee in 1971 to pursue his golfing activities he returned in 1992 and has been a loyal and enthusiastic member, sometimes loud since then. This included a spell as Club Chairman between 1999 and 2005. As a club we very much appreciate the time he has given up over this period and are pleased to know he will continue to be co opted on the bar committee.