

## The Ipswich and Suffolk Club - Chairman's update for 2020

**Christmas Eve 1885. 135 years ago the Ipswich and Suffolk Club came to be. In that time I have been chairman twice. The last time was 20 years ago in the year 2000! The year 2000 that was remembered for the vaunted millennium bug. Now we are in 2020 which will be remembered for Covid-19.**

Never in our wildest dreams, or nightmares, would we have predicted the challenges the Club would face throughout this horrendous year. A year which forced huge decisions on everyone throughout the World! Undoubtedly the full effect of Covid-19 will not be known for years to come!

10 months of disruption since the start of the first lockdown back in March which culminated in 5 months of complete closure of our club. Being optimistic, our primary objective was to ensure the safety of the members and the staff and to continue to maintain the financial health of the Club.

The strategy of the Board has been not to rush to immediate decisions but to assess the situation as it transpired. We felt we had to protect the Club with short-term financial measures. 2020 has been a very tough year for those running the Club. Regretfully, though, the last few months have meant making difficult decisions. Some members of staff have been put on furlough, some have taken voluntary redundancy, and one of our stalwarts, Shelia, has retired. She has been part of the fixtures for

42 years and I am delighted to confirm that the Board has offered her honorary membership in recognition of her wonderful service.

The effects on the hospitality sector have been severe and we, like many other establishments, have cut our costs as far as we can. As such I want to thank all members, all staff and those on the Board for their efforts this year. I would also like to thank the various club captains. Allan Williams - Snooker, who managed to organise the finals of 2 outstanding competitions. Allan Gosling - Golf, who along with Robert did a fantastic job to keep activities ongoing during these tricky times and successfully navigated the lockdowns and rules of six to organise a golf day at Ipswich Golf Club. It would be remiss of me not to mention the winner on that day – it was yours truly! Sadly Scrabble, Bridge and the Book Club have had to take a sabbatical for the time being, as has the Ladies Lunch Club who have not been able to meet for their monthly luncheon. I have no doubt though they will all be back!

It would seem that our challenges with Covid-19 will continue for the foreseeable future. The Board are now formulating plans for the future operations as best they can. Endeavouring to enter the world of social media but for now, in this new world of Zoom calls and social distancing we welcome you to renew your membership. We want to welcome you back. Until the subscription renewals are received



we will be running a substantial monthly cash reduction. We received nearly £80,000 worth of government support in the six months to 30th September which meant we were able to stand still.

Following the Board's decision to defer the renewal of membership in September 2020 we are now inviting you to renew your subscription for the forthcoming season 2021/2022 which has been frozen to the same level as September 2019. Your renewal of membership is now essential to ensure the club continues for the next 135 years!

Sadly this is all I can say for the time being but from myself and the Board, a heartfelt wish that everyone stays safe and we look forward to seeing you all soon.

**Keith Ferguson**  
Chairman

# From the General Manager's office

**Cast your minds back to March 18th 2020. The day the Ipswich and Suffolk Club closed its doors for the first time due to Covid-19.**

During this first lockdown the Directors and the staff pulled out all the stops to close the clubhouse as quickly and efficiently as they could. Perhaps not the best time for me to have been incapacitated with horrendous back problems and on sick leave for 6 weeks!

From my sick bed I was able to assist in the planning and working towards the time when the club could re-open and welcome members back again – albeit on a limited basis. This comprised of a thorough cleansing of the club and organising and risk-assessing a traffic-flow system.

Thankfully we were able to open our doors again on August 3rd 2020. Eat Out to Help Out was the order of the day and we were all extremely grateful for the support shown by members. During the lockdown we had managed to complete works on the snug which became very popular

with everyone. Those of you who have been frequenting the club during this time may have noticed a change in the cuisine offered which is a result of Chef Richard Monk working together with me to produce a more modern style of menu. Many compliments have been received.

Then just when we were beginning to see the wood from the trees the government announced a 2nd lockdown. So once again we have been using this time to restart planned works and this time it has been the Bistro. A very large glass panel has been installed – it took 4 burly men! Next we will be lowering the ceiling, air-con will be installed, a sound system and lighting. If all goes to plan this should be completed by April 2021.

Sadly though, at this time, we are not able to restart our Social Calendar as we had planned to do. But please be assured that as soon as we are given the government go ahead with some modifications and good planning club events will be re-starting.



Despite all the hurdles that have been put in our way we can report that we are still recruiting new members and as such we welcome :-

- Mr Brian Hewitt
- Mr Simon Gladwell
- Mr David Chittock

Although we are now operating with a good deal less staff than previously, we are all looking forward very much to welcoming you back in the coming weeks.

**Robert Coppin**  
*Club General Manager*



## Sheila retiring from the Bar

**Sheila became a staff member at the club officially on 7th January 1979, which means she has been with us for 42 years!**

It all started when a friend asked her to help at a Club function in December 1978 where a certain Dr Hughes (a man of much character) grabbed her in the corridor, asked her where she was going as she was leaving, and stating that she was needed long term for the club! So, we have Dr Hughes to thank for recruiting Sheila and for giving us all such a wonderful and bright happy person.

Sheila says that the main reason she has been with us so long is a testimony to the people she has met over the years. Both the staff, and the members and their friends. It is what she will miss most in her retirement. But, the good news is that Sheila is still wanting to occasionally help at future events (try and stop her she says!).

In return for all the years she has been a dedicated employee, she is to be given a honorary lifetime membership. Which means we will still be able to see her, along with her guests at the Club and Club events in the coming years.

