

Winchester Hockey Club  
*1891 to 2011 – 120 years of Hockey!*  
**Club History**



Until 1997, Winchester had two separate Hockey Clubs, Winchester Men's Hockey Club and Winchester Women's Hockey Club, both of which have flourished in the city for many years. However, in September 1997, after lengthy negotiations, the two clubs officially merged to become Winchester Hockey Club.

### **Men's History**

Winchester Men's Hockey Club is one of the oldest hockey clubs in the world, if not the oldest. The club began on March 6th 1881 when an inaugural Annual General Meeting was held which appointed Mr. A. Tebbutt as Captain and Mr. B. Chancellor as Secretary and Treasurer. That was over 125 years ago, Queen Victoria still had 20 years to reign, the British Empire covered half the Globe and the Industrial Revolution was in full swing.

The first season began in that year, the club being called the Winchester Hockey and Bandy Club (Bandy being the name of the hockey on ice game). Initially the matches were inter-club, mainly because there were no opposition clubs! The club grew in numbers over the next 20 years, as did the number of clubs playing hockey, so by the turn of the century, fixtures were being played all over Hampshire.

Between the two world wars, although the club was without doubt in existence, very little details of events have been found. However, proper records of the club began after World War Two, and on 2nd October 1945, Mr. L. Whitfield convened a meeting to re-form the club after the disruption of the war. Fixtures were quickly set up for that season with home games being played at Bar End. The club had about 20 regular players. During the first few post war years the Club Committee worked hard to put the club onto a sound footing. Fixtures were reviewed and strengthened, notably after petrol rationing was lifted. Training started and by the 1955/56 season a 3 XI was formed.

During the last 40 years or so the club has gone from strength to strength. Veteran sides have been introduced and a Junior section started with links with various local schools. 1st XI league hockey began in 1972/73 and this considerably raised the standard of play for the whole club and really put the club on a more serious footing.

In 1997 the Men's and Women's sections joined together. This has proved to be a great success and we now boast over 250 members, and an annual turnover of over £45,000. Today the club has never been stronger; we run 10 Men's sides, five Indoor sides, Summer league teams and go on tour every year to Holland which is great fun. It is quite amazing to think that it all started over 125 years ago and our heartfelt thanks goes out to all those people who have helped create what we have the privilege to know today.

It seems strange to think that although the club has become such a large entity, we have not really had a permanent home. Home matches have been played in all sorts of places from a tarmac pitch at Bushfield camp to the North Walls recreation ground, whilst after match socialising has been in a variety of club houses and local hostelrys. In 1996, Neil Birkett, Kings School Deputy Head, applied for a lottery grant to build an astroturf pitch at Kings, as well as various other sporting facilities. This was successful and in 1998 the astro was built and a clubhouse followed shortly after, being completed in 2000 as part of the Schools Community Sports Centre. A very fitting end to the 20th Century - Winchester Hockey Club had found a base, but not a home. In 2006 a new pitch at Bar End opened new opportunities, but, sans clubhouse, the Club currently operates from the wonderful Bell Inn PH!



### **Women's History**

Winchester Women's Hockey Club, or Winchester Ladies Hockey Club as it was known, was one of the first clubs in Hampshire and was affiliated to the Hampshire Hockey Association in 1904. It remained affiliated for the next three seasons but then there was a gap of some six years before the club was formally started in 1919.

The club originally had 40 members. They practised on Tuesdays and had matches on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons. At first the home pitch was at the Rifle Depot, Bar End but due to regular flooding, the club moved to the Royal Green Jacket's cricket ground in St Cross in 1929 where they stayed until 1939.

During the war years only a few matches were played. After the war, the Club moved to the King George V Playing Fields for one season and then to the North Walls Recreation Ground. This became the home pitch until 1989/90 when regular use began to be made of Southampton Sports Centre's artificial pitch. In the 1990/1 season the Club began to play on the artificial pitch at Perrins Community College in Alresford and usage here increased over the next few seasons so that by 1997, only the occasional Junior match was still played at North Walls.

When North Walls was first used, teams changed and had teas in the pavilion but in the 1970s, the Leisure Centre was built and so this was used instead. However, in 1984, the Club became part of the Winchester Sports Association, along with the Men's section (although the two clubs did not merge), and from then on the players and supporters were able to use the purpose built clubhouse at Abbots Barton.

The first 'uniform' was a blue beret, white shirt, mauve tie and long navy skirt with different colour braid on the skirt to denote merit. Over the years changes have been made to the kit not only in the style but also in colour and, thankfully, the beret is no more! At one stage the club had gold socks along with the navy skirts but some years ago it was decided that the gold socks should be replaced with purple ones in order to maintain a link with the past. The white shirt remains as the change strip.

The Club originally ran only one team. Although a 2nd XI was mentioned early in the records and kept re-appearing at regular intervals, it was not until 1967 that it officially came into existence with a full fixture list; the 3rd XI was formed in 1978. In addition to these three teams, there are also now several Junior teams, a Floodlit team, a Vets team and an Indoor team.

The first team originally played in the Hampshire League but in 1988/89 season they won Hampshire League Division One and the Club's Championship and were therefore promoted to the South League Division Two. The first season they narrowly escaped relegation but in the next season (1991/2) they won promotion to South Division One where they have remained ever since.

Over the course of almost a hundred years since the club was first affiliated, it has relied on many dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers to keep it going and to build it up with some members holding posts and working tirelessly for the club for literally years on end. It is thanks to all these women and to everyone who has taken an interest in the club, that Winchester Women's Hockey Club has been so successful.