

## Club History from 1890

### A brief history of the club from 1890

If one looks at a list of clubs formed in Middlesex that are no longer affiliated you will find Willesden & Harrow, 1890, then if you look at the list of current affiliated clubs you will find Harrow, 1896, formerly Willesden & Harrow. We know very little about the clubs history from 1890 until 1908. The first official and recorded report on the club's activities appears in our minutes of April 1st 1909 and this being the end of the hockey year, it can be assumed that the season was 1908/9. As reference is made to "the present grounds to be again taken from September 1909 to March 31st 1910", it can be concluded that the previous season was in fact 1907/8, and it is from this date that our club officially starts its history.

The first ground of the club was at Kenton Lane, where a princely sum of £15 was paid for the season. There was a Ladies section in these early days, but due to lack of lady players this was soon disbanded. From the beginning, the club has suffered from having to change grounds. In 1912 Harrow were using the Universities and Public Schools Sports Ground then at Wembley Park. Then to Pinner Cricket Club's ground at Pinner Green. September 1914 saw the club disbanded for the duration of the First World War, it was reformed at a general meeting held on 18th September 1919.

Whilst no reference was made as to where the club was playing, it is minuted that the secretary was to apply to the Urban District Council for an extra pitch for 1920/21 as with the large increase of membership, it would be expected to run four teams, two for ladies and two for gentlemen. The minutes of December 18th 1919 record a refusal by the Harrow Urban District Council for a ground and that the club were trying for a pitch on the grounds of the Hill Golf Club (assumed to be Pinner Golf Club).

In 1921 the club rented two pitches from the derelicts Cricket Club (Harrow Town), at Rayners Lane. In 1922 the Ladies formed their own club known as the Harrow Women's Hockey Club with control over their own finances and direction. The club left Rayners Lane due to the pitches becoming waterlogged. Whilst several other pitches in the surrounding areas were tried, it was not until Pinner Cricket Club offered a pitch, including use of the pavilion that the club settled down. But even this did not solve all our problems for in April 1923 it was reported that the grounds at Preston Road would no longer be available. Grounds as far as Watford, Bushey and Boston Manor were being looked at. Due to a lack of numbers the Ladies section was abandoned but in 1925 Harrow Weald Ladies Hockey Club approached Harrow with a view to amalgamation.

Harrow Weald already had a hockey pitch. By 1930 two men's teams were the mainstay of the club. The club played on two grounds, one at Harrow Weald and one at Headstone Manor although neither provided perfect playing surfaces. The AGM of 1939 saw the club disbanded for the duration of another World War. The club reformed in 1946 with two men's teams. In 1949 there were four men's teams playing on a Saturday and some games being played on Sundays too. The club amalgamated with the Harrow Town Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club and found themselves playing at Rayners Lane again. The old problem of the famous "Middlesex Clay" was taking its toll of fixtures and hardly had the new club name formed in the minds of players, when the club was off looking for other grounds. In 1951 Stanmore Cricket Club offered two pitches and the club moved to Stanmore. Yet again the condition of the grounds was high on the discussion list.

By 1957 there were five regular men's teams and a full Sunday programme and by 1959 with a membership of over 100,

a sixth team was playing. This brought with it problems over numbers of pitches. By 1963 there was a colts team but the weather had taken its toll of games and the Stanmore ground had hardly been played on. 1967 saw the amalgamation of the Golders Green Ladies Hockey Club with three ladies teams bringing the number of teams playing to nine.

In the early seventies indoor hockey was introduced with teams playing in local leagues. Indoor training was established at Harrow Leisure Centre until the cost of hiring the hall became prohibitive. The need for good grass pitches saw the club travelling out of the Borough to Hartspring Leisure Centre where Hertsmere provided two league pitches. Two pitches were used at Whitchurch until the condition of the surface dropped below league standard.

With the membership numbers increasing steadily throughout the eighties the demand for pitches grew ever greater. Once more in 1986 the club had to look outside the Borough to Watford to provide a pitch. By 1985 it had become apparent that the future of hockey lay not with the grass pitches but with astro-turf pitches. In order to keep up with the changing times Harrow Hockey Club had to look once more for pitches. With their being no provision in their own Borough, the club had to move out, initially to Willesden Sports Centre, home of the hockey World Cup, and to Woodside Leisure centre in Watford.

By 1986 ten teams were being fielded and there was a thriving Junior section with eighty children playing at Stanmore. In 1989 Harrow Hockey Club started using the astro at Whitefields School and in 1990, Vale Farm. In 2000 the club fields 4 Men's & 4 Ladies teams on Saturdays. It's youth policy is now proving worthwhile with 60-80 youngsters at coaching on Sundays at Vale Farm. Up to half of the men's and ladies 1st XI are current or past members of our juniors section.