

Good afternoon everyone, and welcome to this very special celebration of 70 years of Horsham Arun Badminton Club. It's a real pleasure to be here today celebrating such an important milestone in the club's history.

I'd like to start by talking about the club we have today, because I think it says a lot about how Horsham Arun has developed over those 70 years.

At its heart, Horsham Arun is a club run by its members, for its members, with the simple aim of providing the opportunity to enjoy the excellent sport of badminton. Whether you play socially, for fitness, to meet friends, or competitively, there is a place for you here.

One of the things that makes Horsham Arun particularly special is our daytime badminton programme. We offer regular daytime sessions throughout the week, alongside our evening sessions. In fact, we are the only club in Sussex to offer regular daytime badminton. For many of us, these sessions are about much more than simply playing badminton. They're about keeping active, meeting people, having a laugh and maintaining friendships.

For those who want something more competitive, we also have a wide range of league teams, giving members the opportunity to test themselves at different levels. We play in Surrey, West Weald, Crawley, Mid Sussex, Brighton and Worthing. We also have players who represent their county and country!

So that's the club we have today. But how did we get here?

According to Badminton England records, badminton was first played in Horsham as far back as 1911, at the Drill Hall. By 1954 there were two clubs in Horsham, both playing at the Albion Hall, now Swan Walk. There was the Horsham Club, formerly the Roffey Club, and the West Horsham Club, formerly the Saracens Club.

In 1956, West Horsham became Arun Badminton Club and was registered with Badminton England. When the area around the Albion Hall was due to be developed, the two clubs amalgamated, hoping that together they would have a stronger case for alternative accommodation from Horsham District Council. And so, Horsham Arun Badminton Club was born.

Things weren't always quite as comfortable as they are today! In the early 1970s, for about a year, the club played in an Atcost garage at the old Army camp in Broadbridge Heath — complete with a concrete floor and leaking roof. In 1973, Horsham District Council provided us with a two-court clubhouse on a 21-year lease. It was officially opened by Peter Horden MP.

This building became affectionately known by our longer-serving members as "The Tin Hut". There was no heating, and condensation formed on the cold tiled floor. But the members weren't going to let that stop them. After plenty of fundraising, an insulated floor was eventually installed.

Membership continued to grow, and members began to be nominated for county matches. By 1980,

further fundraising had produced a larger lounge — although, apparently, it was still cold enough for members to need gloves to keep their hands warm! Then, in the mid-1980s, Tesco wanted to build a superstore on the site.

Fortunately, our long lease with Horsham District Council enabled us to negotiate a new three-court hall and club room. In 1987 we moved into our new premises — described at the time as the best in the South. For many of our longer-serving members, that building is still remembered simply as “The Old Hall”.

And then, in 2018, came our latest move, when we moved here to The Bridge, our home today.

So, when we look around today, it’s worth remembering just how far we’ve travelled. From the Drill Hall, to the Albion Hall, to a leaking garage, to the Tin Hut, to the Old Hall — and finally here to The Bridge.

But the buildings aren’t really what make Horsham Arun special. It’s the people.

The people who have played here over the years, raised money, represented the club, developed our juniors, organised sessions and matches, and simply turned up week after week because they love badminton and enjoy being part of the club.

I’d also particularly like to recognise our committee and all those who have contributed to the club over the years, as well as those who continue to contribute today. From organising sessions and teams, managing membership and finances, looking after our facilities and website, to those who give their time, help with purchase shuttles — every contribution makes a huge difference.

We also owe thanks to Places Leisure, who provide the facilities from which our club operates, and more recently to The Badminton Zone, with whom we’ve formed a new partnership. These relationships are important to the future of the club and help us continue to provide the opportunities that our members enjoy today.

Much of this work happens quietly and isn’t always noticed, but without the commitment of so many people over the years, we simply wouldn’t have the club we have today. So to everyone who has contributed, whether through time, expertise, financial support or simply by helping out when needed — thank you.

You are all part of the story of Horsham Arun, and you are helping to write the next chapter.

Whether you’ve been a member for decades or have only recently joined, you’re now part of that continuing story.

So, as we celebrate 70 years of Horsham Arun, I'd like to thank everyone who has contributed to making the club what it is today — and particularly those who continue to give their time to keep it thriving.

Most importantly, thank you to all of you for being here, for playing this wonderful sport, and for being part of the Horsham Arun family.

Happy 70th anniversary — and here's to the next 70 years!"