

John Bint

This is my thirty-third season playing adult hockey which may seem an awfully long time to some of you. It's also the length of time that I've known John Bint, and I recall first meeting him socially after my first ever mixed hockey match for Cowley Hockey Club.

My first impressions were of this noisy bloke stood at the bar wearing a Fedora hat who seemed to be getting quite pissed, but without actually drinking much beer! I later found out that he was instead getting through a vast amount of something else, which turned out to be Whisky-Mac! To say John was chatty was certainly an understatement and not just with other hockey players. In fact John loved talking to absolutely everybody, and over the years I realised that he was one of the most genuine and likeable chaps I've met, always ready to see the best in people, and ever ready to lend a helping hand to anybody down on their uppers.

Aside from his gregarious personality, John "The Cat" was also a brilliant keeper who represented Oxfordshire at County level in both mens and mixed, and also played club hockey at the highest levels for City, Hawks, Cowley, Headington and latterly Rover winning dozens of medals and trophies over a career spanning many years. More recently John and I played together again but this time for Headington Hamsters, which was a kind of unofficial veterans' team with an emphasis on post match drinking. In fact the Hamsters team name is in part down to John although it's not something I should readily expand upon here!

Sadly John recently passed away after fighting a long illness, and even during those difficult times he always maintained his sense of humour and was also an active supporter of our club watching the ladies thirds regularly. "Binty" will be missed by all that knew him and I suspect that anecdotally, his memory will live on for many years to come. Just to end by recounting such a story, a good few years ago we were playing a match on Cowley Marsh (yes IT WAS a grass pitch) in a game that was to be fair, pretty one sided in our favour. "Binty" was in goal and I was sweeper and since not much was happening at our end, both of us were starting to feel the cold. "Jonesy" I heard, "Do you want something to warm you up?" and with some trepidation I wandered into the goal, whereupon a hip-flask full of whisky miraculously appeared as if from nowhere.

As we both sat on the backboard exchanging swigs and pleasantries, at that exact moment the oppositions centre forward (who had been largely absent) suddenly latched onto a through ball and headed towards us at great pace. I started to panic and desperately tried to retrieve my stick which had got caught in the net at the back of the goal, but needn't have worried as the umpire looked across the pitch, and seeing John stood in goal ostensibly on his own, immediately blew his whistle for offside. It's not often that you see somebody going completely ape on a cold winters afternoon, and I don't think Johns' offer of a drink did very much to calm him down either, but I would hope on reflection that the forward might now see the funny side.

God bless you John Bint – we'll all miss you.

John Jones – Captain (Rover Hamsters – in memory)