

This is my 13th season as League Controller.

For the first couple of years I shared the work with somebody else, who unexpectedly quit, leaving me doing it on my own for the last decade.

I set about changing things from the beginning, adding some features to the website (such as a downloads page), and I completely redesigned the Contacts & Fixtures Handbook so that it's now got that "business card" look, displaying all the club's contact details, and in the margin there's a link to the club's website if they have one, and also a link to Google maps or Streetview showing the exact location of the club venue.

The old printed-out version of the fixtures handbook used to go out of date after a few weeks, and I changed it so there are constant updates online throughout the season. Every single re-arranged fixture date is now changed online that same day, and highlighted in bold italics so it can easily be seen.

I also decided right from the start I would do the results as they came in. The Chief Grader has told me it's the quickest results service in Scotland, which probably means in the UK, who knows... This means having the grading program open from about 10.30 to 12.30 every night, and my email alerts on so I know when they're coming in. The first results take about 10 minutes, but then a queue starts. I decided I would reply to everyone as soon as their result was online, even if I've got another one for the same division still to do, because I heard from feedback that some captains want to see how the league table looks after their result goes online. As I'm also the League Controller for the Dunbartonshire League, and last season I did the Lanarkshire League as well, this means that an average Monday or Thursday night for me has half a dozen fixtures each to get through, and results come in even on Fridays, when there's no club open.

People are surprised when they find out I have to do this for more than half a year.

The season begins on the first week of October and it goes on right to the last week of April, which is seven months. I get 2 weeks off at Xmas and New Year, but this is cancelled out by having to make up all the fixtures before the season starts, which is spread over 3 weeks in September. John McCartan and I do this as a team, both GL and DL fixtures, and we ask clubs to fill out an entry form ready by the Friday before the fixtures meeting. The deadline is midnight Friday and clubs wait till the last minute to send it in. Amazingly, people start asking us on the Saturday "Where's the provisional fixtures? I can't see them on the website!". Actually it takes almost the whole weekend to get them ready to go online on the Monday. We also seem to have made our job harder by suggesting a couple of years ago that clubs could give us a list of dates to be fixture-free such as "Every 2nd Thursday of the month" for club championships etc., and that we would also try and avoid clashes between different leagues. The list of proscribed dates has got longer and longer and subsequently, harder to avoid clashes. After doing all one club's fixtures to suit their list, you later find their opponents have a clash and so it has to be moved, and then a chain starts. This extra work wouldn't be so bad but clubs actually complain to us if we give them one of the dates they don't like, even if we couldn't find an alternative. They seem to forget that these are only PROVISIONAL fixtures. That's what the fixtures meeting's for, to meet other clubs and find suitable dates... After last September, John and I debated whether we might go back to the old way and just hand out the first dates we get, because of the grief. When people say they don't think we avoided their list of dates properly, or their teams in different divisions are playing on the same night, or they have no confidence in us, it's a bit of a let-down...

But don't get me wrong. I usually get positive feedback. I get a lot of job satisfaction when people say "we really like seeing the fast results" or "Thanks for all the work you do behind the scenes". I was chuffed when somebody once told me they even looked at the divisions they weren't playing in, just because it was "like reading the news"!

So, after every summer break I'm usually refreshed and ready for it all to go around again, and I guess this summer will be no exception.

That's the end of this season's report, thank you.