**REIGATE PRIORY 3RD XI 2018 CAPTAIN’S REPORT**

2018 was a transitional season for Reigate Priory 3rd XI. James Brickley stepped down after 9 seasons to be replaced as captain by Antony Ireland. Over the winter, the squad lost several key players to injury, relocation and family commitments, making availability a challenge in the first half of the season.

Having dropped 12 catches in defeat to Dulwich on the opening day, Priory were saved by the rain after conceding 92 in 14 overs at Sunbury. They then won 3 in a row including a thrilling 1 run win over Spencer to kick-start the season and stay in contention.

A close defeat to Weybridge (gifting the visitors an extra hour having misread the new match timings!) followed by a draw at Ashtead left Priory mid-table. Priory next chased 200 to win at Walton, but title hopes hung on beating league leaders Wimbledon at home on 30 June.

Priory bowled brilliantly to restrict Wimbledon to 168 but collapsed from 132-5 to 150 all out, slipping to 5th. This was a key defeat. Sloppy losses to Sunbury and Sutton eliminated all hope of winning the league, but excellent wins defending 137 against Weybridge and 153 against Spencer showed the team was still a force to be reckoned with on its day.

Overall, Priory were a batsman or two light this year, but the bowlers were often outstanding.

There were as always some strong individual performances. Ireland was top run scorer in the division with 405 runs while Brickley was second top wicket taker with 25 wickets. New keeper-batsman Fraser McGuinness scored an impressive 303 runs in just 8 innings, while new seamer Elliot Lodge and Steve Cross also made several match-winning contributions with the ball.

However, Priory struggled to field a consistent XI all season, reflecting in mixed results. Fourth was ultimately a fair finish, but this ambitious side will regroup and expect better in 2019.