

Club AGM 2023

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Albany Lawn Tennis Club Held on Wednesday 6 December 2023 at Albany Lawn Tennis Club at 7pm

Opening

The following members were present at the meeting:

Tim Davies (TD), Bryan Sharp (BS), Pat Sharp (PS), David Bufton (DB), Ray Roberts (RR), Jan Gaskill (JG), Andrew Mackness (AM), David Wormald (DW), Max Stokoe (MS), Nancy Mackness (NM), Carisa Skehan (CS), David Kennaugh (DK), Val Worth (VW), Anthony Morgan (AM), Carolina Ganzo-Perez (CGP) and Ian Copley (IC).

Apologies were received with thanks from amongst the following: Ben Cunningham, Andrew Farnworth, Chris Butler, Bridget Stuart, Mike Jackson and Barbara McNeill.

TD welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked members for attending. It was hoped that the festive mince pies and mulled wine were a welcome addition to this year's meeting!

The Agenda and previous year's Minutes had been circulated in advance of the meeting by e-mail and linking to the Club's website. It was noted that a quorum of at least 10 members (aged 18 or over) was required, and it was confirmed that we were quorate and the Chairman declared the meeting open.

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2022 were approved and TD was authorised to sign them accordingly.

The Chairman confirmed that there were no outstanding matters arising.

Chairman's Report

TD noted that this was his second AGM as Chairman with club activities and operations getting more familiar. As always there is a lot going on which will be covered throughout the course of the meeting.

He then proceeded to deliver his Chairman's Report as follows:

1. General Remarks

I am pleased to report that the Club has enjoyed another strong year from both a tennis and a financial perspective despite the challenges of the external economic environment. In summary:

- Membership levels remain in good shape, with a very encouraging rebound in the amount of Mini members;

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- Current financials are strong and we are continuing to build sinking fund reserves for future development;
- The club facilities and its outdoor courts continue to be maintained to an excellent condition. The indoor court as we know is due for refurbishment which we'll come on to later;
- The club continues to operate popular junior and senior competitions and activities.

As always, a huge amount of work goes on behind the scenes to keep things running smoothly and I want to say a big thank you to all the Committee members, coaching team, as well as the many members who help out in so many ways.

The club could simply not function without these committed volunteers devoting their time and energy and I encourage anyone who can to volunteer and pitch in where you can.

2. Strategic Aims

As a general reminder to members, the current strategic aims of the club are:

No1: to grow the membership

No2: to host social activities & events that make the club a thriving and fun place to be

No3: to develop our senior and junior tennis coaching programmes

No4: to simplify and improve the way the club is managed

No5: to continue to develop the club's facilities (with current focus on the indoor court)

No6: to help raise the profile of tennis in the Isle of Man

No7: to promote regular fun and inclusive competition

I will pick on many of these themes as we progress through the meeting:

3. Progress report

a) Membership

Our current membership totals 213 members, up 6 from 2022. While we have seen a decrease of 15 in Senior playing members, we have seen a very encouraging rebound in Mini members, up 25 on 2022 and back to being above the 2021 level.

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The current breakdown is:

Membership Type	2023	2022	2021	Change
Senior	90	105	100	-15
Young Adult	2	2	5	0
Parent Associate	8	10	11	-2
Junior	44	44	46	0
Mini	57	32	51	25
Life/Honorary/Social	12	14	16	-2
Total	213	207	229	6

Our strategic aim is to get membership numbers up to the 250 level, but realistically this remains a challenge in the current environment.

One key area that we will continue to work closely with the IOM LTA on is in the area of junior development where significant work is being undertaken and funded in order to encourage school children to take up tennis – firstly to try tennis and then hopefully to join their local clubs.

We have also had meetings with UK LTA tennis colleagues around how to develop areas such as Disability Tennis.

b) Social & Events

It has been another busy year in terms of activities and events and our outdoor programmes together with our senior and junior coaching programmes have been well attended through the year.

Club social tennis and the monthly American Open Tournaments organised by Pat and Bryan, and more recently, Ben, continue to prove popular.

We had our annual Open Day in August where we showcased our courts and facilities to the wider public.

We also held our annual Presidents Day, which this year saw Neri Gricevicius and Abigail Cowell crowned winners.

In September, Albany welcomed our long-term friends from Yorkshire, Todmorden LTC. A group of their players travelled to the IoM to play tennis at Albany, Castletown and Ramsey clubs. A great afternoon of tennis was had at Albany followed by sandwiches, cake and tea and a lovely picture from a local Yorkshire artist was presented to Albany.

In terms of non-tennis social activities, I think we can do more and we are actively looking for someone who can assist the Committee in developing and pushing this area forward.

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AM noted that while the ladies have social and tennis activities together, the men less so and thought it would be a good idea to organise something for the men. Will be considered further/brought forward via the Committee.

c) Tennis Coaching

This year, we have seen a fantastic double-team effort between Sean and Max which has addressed the concern we had last year around ensuring coaching coverage. This continues to be an area of exposure for the Club where the Island does not have any full-time coaches, but this coverage is being enhanced by the training programmes being sponsored by the IOM LTA to train up new coaches and it was great to see a number of Albany members go through the Level 2 programme this year (well done to Gareth, Neri and Kathy).

Our junior coaching programme continues to be very popular, benefiting from additional squad sessions each week.

This year we saw the continuation of our senior coaching programmes with tennis surgery held where possible ahead of Tuesday's club night.

Sean also introduced a very successful adult coaching masterclass this year with Ant Hardman (coach of Neil Skupski), providing top level coaching to the Island and earning the Club revenue for the courts used.

d) Club Management

Financially the club is performing well and while I'll leave David our Treasurer to cover this in more detail, I am particularly pleased that we are continuing to build up sinking fund reserves to enable us to maintain and develop the Club's facilities in the future and over the long term.

The ClubSpark online system implemented in recent years continues to help us operate the renewal and membership application process in an efficient manner and allows members to take the option of paying for memberships in monthly instalments as well as one-time payments.

I would like to thank Jan, our Membership Secretary, who does an incredible job of managing our membership system and communicating with members throughout the year.

Looking towards the future, the Committee recently agreed it was an appropriate time to launch a Members survey to understand current preferences and help us guide the future direction of the Club. We expect this will be issued in the near future.

e) Committee Changes

Anne Meyler has recently informed us that she wishes to stand down as Welfare Officer as a result of her son no longer playing as a junior at the Club and wider working time constraints. We are therefore seeking a replacement for this role as advised to members in a recent email

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communication. The Committee expressed their thanks to Anne for her much valued contribution over the years. PS noted that the Club cannot operate without this key role being filled. CGP enquired whether a job description was available, to which TD responded that he believed so and would look it up and share.

I am delighted to announce that Andrew Mackness agreed in November to join the Committee (subject to AGM approval) – bringing a wealth of practical tennis and business experience as well as being a keen and active member.

I am also delighted to announce that David Wormald has very recently agreed to join the Committee and work with Pat in taking over a number of Club Secretarial and Administrative responsibilities.

In order to make applications more attractive, Committee roles will have their club subscriptions moved from being partially to fully subsidised (with a nominal £100 paid to any committee member not playing tennis/paying a full subscription).

TD noted that he would return to the formal election of officers at item 8 in the agenda.

f) Facilities

Turning to the club's facilities, I would like to offer our thanks in particular to Bryan who continues to work tirelessly to keep the clubhouse and its courts in such great shape. Ray and others also put a lot of hard work on a week to week basis.

The key issue in this category is obviously the indoor court and as many of you will know, the court roof is reaching the end of its life and needs replacement.

During the year we organised for our existing indoor court providers to come over from the UK to fully assess our needs and firm up a quote for this work.

We have also asked local providers of cladded steel structures to provide an alternative comparative quote, which remains outstanding but we expect to be substantially cheaper. Additional alternatives exist, all of which have their pros and cons.

It is the intention of the Committee to organise a dedicated Members' meeting/EGM to discuss proposals once they are better specified and the Committee are in a position to make more concrete proposals.

The intention remains for no specific cohort of Members to pay different levels than others over time and that continuing long term maintenance is funded through a long term Sinking Fund and by loan debt/grants where necessary.

TD then introduced Ian Copley, a club member with professional architectural and planning expertise. He has been assisting the committee in interactions with structure providers,

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investigating technical matters such as structural weight loads, wind sway and current building codes. IC spoke on these matters and answered a number of member questions.

A number of members commented that it would be beneficial to the club and its coaching programmes to have additional courts covered for example by a bubble over the two adjoining courts. TD, BS and DB noted that this topic had been looked at several times before and that there are challenges with the land footprint, but will be further picked up in advance of any future members EGM.

A question was raised as to whether a dehumidifier would help with the indoor court. BS responded that when he had looked at this in the past, a machine of sufficient capability would cost in the region of £35K and was therefore cost-prohibitive. AM challenged whether this was the case and thought cheaper options might be possible. The Committee will take this off-line to consider.

A question was raised as to whether there was accident insurance in place where there might be water or condensation on court. TD replied that where any member felt uncomfortable with the suitability of the court, they should not play and request a refund of any booking fee, but that insurance was indeed in place as a standard package organised through our LTA membership.

A suggestion was made by MS as to whether a different outdoor court lighting system could be implemented that would allow for junior players to use the courts after dark i.e. could the token based system be replaced by a code input or credit card tap system (which could also benefit the club's revenue). The Committee will take this forward to investigate any cost-effective options in this area.

AM inquired around the legal structure of the Club, how the land and buildings were owned, how the Trust fitted into the structure, and whether succession planning was being considered. He noted that a number of other members also wished to understand this better and that perhaps a separate meeting could be organised in this regard. TD responded that the best way to address this was for BS and PS to take this away as an action but that it was an opportune time to make sure everything was fully understood and future proofed. TD noted that the IoM LTA is also looking at governance and that other structures such as a limited liability company are becoming more popular these days than Trusts.

TD also noted that the Club's boiler was recently replaced and is now more cost-efficient and operated through a new phone app based timer system which we are continuing to roll-out and refine.

g) Tennis IOM and PR

My thanks to Pat for her regular newsletter and report for the newspaper. Albany continues to outperform our peers in this area which is great to see.

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Through a combination of Ben and myself, I believe we have improved our online footprint through our internet site and Facebook.

A huge thanks to our various sponsors of the club this year, in particular to our key sponsor of junior tennis, Kings Spa who continue to offer their very appreciated generous support.

In the last year, sponsorship and fund raising generated approximately 10% of the club's income and aims to cover the majority of our junior programme. It is Pat that organises most of this and I would like to thank her for this. Please do note the banners on the indoor court and support these companies in return where possible.

h) Competition

With respect to Competition, it continues to be a challenge to put out a full complement of our best players for league matches, but we did manage to put out a consistently strong Men's A team this year which ended up having a fantastic campaign and won Division 1!

Division 2 was also a very competitive division this year and while we put out a good representation, we ended up finishing third.

Regrettably, we were not able to form a ladies or mixed team and we really hope we can address this for the coming year.

The Albany Chrystals Senior Open took place in April, with some excellent tennis played across all categories, particularly the men's final where Orry Farnworth defeated Sean Drewry in a very closely fought match.

Albany's Club Championships this year were kindly sponsored by Dale & Co and while some of our events had limited entries, there was some very competitive tennis played with congratulations to all our winners.

It was great to see our Club Coach, Sean, do so well in the 2023 IoM Senior Championships, winning the singles, doubles and mixed competitions. It was also good to see one of our most successful juniors, Orry Farnworth, come runner-up in the singles and win the doubles.

We also saw four of our members represent the Isle of Man at the 2023 Island Games in Guernsey, with Sean going on to win a Gold Medal in the mixed doubles.

4. Finance

We will turn next to our treasurer David Bufton to give his finance report and I would like to thank him for the huge amount of work that goes into preparing the accounts as well as keeping the Club's finances in order.

Treasurer's Address

DB thanked all for their attendance this evening. He noted he would like to take this opportunity to talk through the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023, but first, to thank the committee for their help and patience during the year, especially Pat and Bryan Sharp, and Jan Gaskill for helping with the day to day management of payments and receipts, which makes his job so much easier.

As you will see from the Treasurer's report and the Revenue Account on pages 3 and 5 respectively, the Club returned a profit of £20,694 before any transfer to the Sinking Fund for the Year Ended 31st August 2023, up from last year's profit of £7,169.

Increased subscription rates have improved our revenue, but advertising, sponsorship and fund-raising income were also higher.

On the cost side, we incurred lower overall costs of coaching and lower levels of repairs and maintenance than last year. Initiatives around cost efficient lighting and heating have successfully helped to mitigate against significant energy price increases.

Our cash balances have increased £20K year-on-year to £57K. The club continues to have no debt.

Overall in the current environment, this is a very good result - the club continues to operate within its own means as well as continuing to build up a sinking fund for future capital projects.

It is proposed that £18K be transferred to the sinking fund, which will help go towards new capital projects such as a new roof for the indoor court.

DB explained how this cash balance will provide a very welcome backstop to any future borrowing from a bank.

AM inquired around the ability to borrow against the land and property of the Club. TD noted that this was a possibility and the Committee had agreed at a recent meeting that they should obtain an independent valuation in order to be prepared for all options in this regard.

AM also inquired around the interest rate obtained on the Club's bank balance. DB replied that funds had been moved to a HSBC deposit account earning in excess of 2%. AM noted that we should be able to do better than that, to which DB agreed that higher rates were available in the market but the time to open new banking relationships for the Club was significant compared to the monetary benefit. The Committee will continue to assess the cost/benefit equation.

With no further questions, DB proposed a motion that the accounts are adopted which was seconded and approved by the members.

TD thanked DB for his report.

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Subscriptions for 2024

Members will recall we took decisive action last year to address the significant challenges of cost inflation to the Club and I am pleased to report that this had the desired effect. The Club protected itself against external cost increases while seeking to reduce any costs where it could.

The result of this activity is a position where I am recommending no further increases to subscriptions for 2024.

It is further proposed that Parent Associate memberships be reduced to £80 from £115 as previous levels were considered expensive for the amount of play involved and were not being taken up. We would prefer more juniors to have the option of playing with their parents outside of the standard coaching sessions.

The following summarises the various proposed categories of membership subscriptions:

Membership Type	Membership Year from 1 June 2024	
	Upfront Annual Rate	Or 9 Monthly Payments
Senior	£275	£32
Junior	£115	£13
Mini	£90	£11
Young Adult	£195	£23
Joint Couple	£500	£58
Family	£655	£76
Parent Assoc	£80	£10
Social	£25	n/a

The above was proposed, seconded and agreed by the members present.

Election of Officers

TD noted that all current Officers other than AM as mentioned earlier are willing to be re-elected. AM is willing to continue the welfare aspects of her role until we can transition to a new Welfare Officer. As also mentioned earlier, Andrew Mackness and David Wormald are submitted for election for the first time.

Committee Members:

Chairman – Tim Davies	Facilities Officer - Bryan Sharp
Treasurer - David Bufton	Secretary & PR Officer - Pat Sharp
Membership Secretary – Jan Gaskill	Welfare Officer - Anne Meyler (until transition)
Club Sessions Officer - Ray Roberts	Social Media Officer - Ben Cunningham;
Club Coach – Sean Drewry	Committee Member – Andrew Mackness
Committee Member – David Wormald	

Agreed unanimously by the meeting members and elected en bloc.

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The existing President and Vice Presidents were similarly re-elected en bloc.

TD noted that PS wished to propose a number of new Vice President roles. PS explained that Billy Harris is doing exceptionally well on the ATP circuit and as a past junior member could be an excellent ambassador for the club and potentially be invited to spend an hour with our juniors when back on island. PS would also like to recognise the impact that Chris & Joan Budd and Peter Miller have made to the Club over the years and outlined some of these contributions to the meeting. She also noted the purpose of the role which was primarily to maintain a long-term connection to those heavily involved in the development of the club, particularly where they may no longer be in a position to play tennis. The group gets together once a year for a lunch at the clubhouse. These proposals were seconded and approved.

Amendments to Club Rules

There were no amendments proposed or made to the Club Rules. AM enquired were these available to members, to which TD responded that they were available online on the club's Clubspark website.

W K Dale Cup

PS explained WK Dale Cup was donated by Ken Dale in 1966, when he was Treasurer at the Club, with the purpose of rewarding annually, the Member who the Committee thought had done most for the Club and for members, both on and off court.

This year the Cup was presented to Tim Davies. PS explained that Tim had made a significant contribution to the running of the Club, assisting in ensuring a range of issues and challenges were resolved or progressed, oversaw the running of the Club's league teams, took the lead on dealing with the ever-growing administrative requirements from the LTA, while maintaining the financial position of the Club on a very sound setting.

TD expressed his surprise and gratitude to Pat and the Committee for all the support provided during the year and looked forward to contributing as best possible in the coming year.

IOM LTA updates and County Plan

TD advised members that the IoM LTA is in the process of preparing an updated County Plan and that the LTA is keen to work collaboratively with clubs in order to develop tennis on the Island. TD noted that Andrew Farnworth, father of one of Albany's recent top juniors, had recently been appointed as the new Chairman of IoM LTA. Another Albany member, Chris Butler, also sits on the IoM LTA committee as Facilities Manager. While they both couldn't be here this evening, the Committee anticipates working closely with them in 2024.

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AOB

TD invited any other business from the Members.

BS wished to document his thanks to Peter Dunworth for his time in cleaning the Club's gutters. He also offered his thanks to all those who contribute to fundraisers and donate prizes. These generate valuable income for the Club and it would be great if more could do the same.

AM raised the fact that some members would prefer different ways of fund raising than regular tombolas and that both he and a number of members wished to suggest a "100 Club" where members would contribute a direct debit amount each month that would go into a prize draw. Other sports clubs operate this successfully and it could be good for Albany. TD replied that he was supportive of trialling this and that the Club Survey would also help understand broader views on fundraising and looked forward to seeing the results in due course.

AM also raised a concern expressed by several members around half hour gaps in indoor court bookings which either left under-utilised time or was being abused by people playing before and after their allocated slots. TD noted that an email on this topic had recently been issued to all members which the Committee will monitor. A number of members noted that they liked the ability to play for 90 minutes and removing the ability to play for that length of time would likely cause complaint.

Some comments around members keeping the kitchen clean were noted for further consideration by the Committee.

There being no further business, TD thanked everyone for coming, and closed the meeting.

Signed

Date