

Aylsham Tennis Club AGM 2020

Chair's Report

2019 was a year of change for the tennis club as we saw more than half the committee step down over the year after long periods serving the club and moving it forward into the fantastic facilities we enjoy today. During that time we saw the floodlights and the new club hut installed together with a steady increase in membership. In the background there was a lot of work on the processes required to run a club of this size, which was reflected in us successfully passing the LTA's welfare audit in June of this year. Thank you to Andy Tovell for all the work he did for that and other welfare areas over the year. I'd like to acknowledge the foundation the new committee inherited and also the extremely hard work of all committee members, new and old, throughout the year.

To one extent it's been a year of consolidation as new members got their feet under the table, but it's been one of growth too. Club sessions have been well attended throughout the year with all four courts being used on several occasions in the summer and lots of tennis has been played through what's been a pretty mild winter to date. Our coaches, Rachel and Gareth, have been busy as ever as you'll hear from Rachael's report. Last month we introduced a team roll up afternoon on a Sunday afternoon to provide some more competitive group tennis and I'm pleased to announce that Phil Slack will be starting up a tennis ladder later in the spring, so please do speak to him if you're interested in that. We've extended the booking system to cover more courts whilst still leaving court 4 as a turn up and play option. The pressure on courts is still quite low apart from the busier periods in the late afternoon and early evening, but as our membership increases we'll be reviewing whether to make court 4 bookable too. Irrespective, I would encourage members to use the booking system to ensure that they have a court to play on.

On the financial side, you'll hear a positive story from our new treasurer, Marion Arnold, as we build our sinking funds in preparation for the next big project which will be the resurfacing of the courts. That's about five years away we think, and we'll touch on that a bit more later in the agenda, but we're making substantial provision with a number of initiatives to build our financial position. Many of you will have noticed the courtside sponsored banners which are perhaps the most visible sign of the work that Sue Appelby has been doing as our head fundraiser. It would be inappropriate and embarrassing to single Sue out for all the hard work that she does, but I'm going to anyway. From used ball sales to weekly HSE checks, pursuing numerous grants and even magicking up the coaches shed as a donation, she personifies the hard work that each member of the committee puts in in the background on behalf of the club and its members, from Secretary and Treasurer to Website Coordinator and Membership Secretary, I think we owe them all a debt of gratitude.

2019 saw the existing Men's A and Ladies A & B team continue to do well in the city leagues with the Trojans and Tractors playing in the mixed leagues and we again fielded a mixed winter league team. I'd like to thank the captains for all the work they've put in to arrange and. Pleasingly, a new Men's B team was launched. Although not the most successful team in the league, it did what we aim to do at Aylsham Tennis Club: provide the opportunity for enjoyable tennis for all, whether competitive or social, junior or adult as a key part of the community. I'm delighted that we have captains in place for all the summer league teams, congratulating Lisa Kimber as she takes over from Liz Silletoe as

Ladies A captain and also congratulating Robbie Ollman, our Mens A captain, on being appointed as Norfolk Over 65's Men's captain last year.

One disappointment last year was that we had to close the courts for three days in October due to a paperwork issue with the LTA which temporarily invalidated our public liability insurance. This was down to my inexperience with the LTA validation process and I want to apologise for any inconvenience it caused members.

Part of being a community tennis club is to make tennis as accessible as we can to everyone. I'm pleased to announce that we are not proposing any increase to our membership fees in 2020. Rachael and Gareth are active in the schools, bringing numerous juniors through into training programmes at the club and it looks likely that we will be seeing some juniors representing the club in the Men's leagues next year. We have strong focus on diversity too both within the club and if appropriate through our links with Cromer Tennis club around disability tennis. Adult club sessions will continue to be fully inclusive, amongst other things providing a vehicle to help new members find their way into the club. And we continue to welcome paying guests either using the sign in book in the club hut or via the office at the town hall.

The health of the club can be measured in many ways. Longevity is one and next year we will be celebrating our centenary. Success on the courts and financial strength are others, but ultimately it's the people that are the club and the people that make tennis an enjoyable experience. Inclusive and welcoming, competitive but fair. That's the way I'd like both our members and visiting guests or teams to remember their experience of Aylsham Tennis Club. A time when they've enjoyed their tennis. One reflection of that social health is the number of members who support the club on the committee or that immediate wider circle helping to run club nights, activities and events. They always say that if you need something done, you should ask a busy person. Since the AGM last year, John Hall, Terry Deller moved on to other things and I'm sorry to announce that Sarah van Portvliet and Sarah Wright will be stepping down at this AGM. I'd like to thank them all for the work they've (you've) done for the club and know that you'll each be busy elsewhere. In particular, the club has asked me to show our appreciation to Sarah van Poortvliet for her many years of service, implementing the club's new website amongst other things. I'm sure many of you are aware that she's now the proud mother of a Leicester and England U20 rugby player and the family is travelling the country and abroad in support of him.

I'm delighted that we've had such a number nominees come forward for the Committee this year and that many more have offered to support us or arrange activities through the year. I'd like to thank them all on the club's behalf. It will, I hope enable us to build our club up even further. We can't boast a huge clubhouse with lavish facilities but we are sited on a wonderful green space here on this Recreation Ground, which has its own ambitions as a growing facility for the community. And we have a strong relationship with the Bowls Club who allow us to use their buildings and terrace. We do aspire to build the social side of the club up more in 2020 as we look to fill the currently vacant position of social secretary and I'd encourage you to look out for Club activities and as we publicise them and to support them.

So let's look back on another good year at Aylsham Tennis Club and look forward to a great 2020.