



Chairman's report AGM 2021

It's good to be back in person. Zoom meetings have advantages but you never know when you've been muted, everyone's channel hopping and watching something far more interesting, or your Wi-Fi has gone down and no one heard the eloquent, smart speech you just made. I much prefer in person meetings, life through a screen is not an adequate substitute.

Since the last AGM we have had to close the club for a couple of months over the winter covid lockdown and we had a few more months with the clubhouse closed but thankfully we are now back fully operational with a good summer of tennis behind us and things are starting to feel like normal again with all coaching and leagues fully up and running.

You will have all seen the accounts and that we have had a very healthy year, in fact the £25,000 operating surplus is the largest ever and nearly twice what we had in 2019, despite the fact members had a 25% discount on fees. As explained in the account presentation the increased income is wholly down to new members. We now have 22% more members, but importantly from a financial point of view we have 40% more adults and 180% more families. Like any mainly fixed cost business once you cover those fixed costs, any additional income goes straight to the bottom line and that's exactly what we are benefiting from now. Last year we not only retained the new members but added more so I'm optimistic we can do something similar this year and return a similar surplus next year. So please say hello to all the new members and make them feel welcome.

We will need the money, because as you know our refurbishment of court 3 which will start next month has jumped from £30,000 to £60,000 following the discovery of sub surface deterioration. As has been highlighted this will put back our programme for infrastructure development. However, I don't see any real issues with the programme we have in place and believe that courts, lights and fencing will all be of a good standard, while I don't foresee us being anything other than self-funding going forward.

We have been able to enjoy a full summer league season and it's fair to say we need to mention the men's first team who have gained promotion to the premier league. A great achievement for a club our size and one we should be proud of. Hopefully we can stay in there and prosper next year. The men's second and third teams both finished third in their leagues with a lot of players new to league tennis in them, so encouraging signs. The Ladies meanwhile had a difficult year with both the first and second teams playing in a higher league and struggling to get their best teams out due to unavailability of players. This resulted in both getting relegated. However once players are back the squads will be far stronger and more competitive next season. A thank you to Harry and Sarah for organising all the teams.

Club competitions were obviously limited in winter and spring but the club championships were able to go ahead with increased numbers as many new members competed in them for the first time. Some enjoyable tennis was witnessed, my favourite obviously being the men's over 90's. A big thank you to Dave for organising and sorting out all the issues and rescheduling.

The Ladies Wednesday practise sessions seem even more popular than that's possible. The pool of Ladies wanting to play competitive tennis continues to grow and we have entered a third Ladies team in the winter league. We also have two mixed doubles teams running in the winter, compared to four years ago when none of these teams existed. So, a big increase in demand for competitive tennis. The men are now also running a Monday practice night all year round and getting twenty or more attending every week.

Social tennis on Tuesdays and Saturdays continues although I think recently the popularity of Ladies and Men's practice nights may have affected attendance on Tuesdays. So that's something for us to keep our eye on.

Junior coaching is fully up and running with three mini green players getting to the semi-finals of the County championships and one of them winning it. Many thanks to Stuart for getting us a grant to continue the Adult coaching programme. It's been a tough two years for the coaches so it's good to see a full coaching programme back and at least as many players participating as previously.

The club house is fully open now. The bar is open every evening and it's important for us as a club to support it otherwise we may lose this facility. Social activities are starting again, and we enjoyed a well-attended Captains night a week ago. The annual dinner is again planned at Haigs for Saturday 20th November. It's not just for the finalists or people who have won a trophy - it's a great night for everyone, so please come along. Please contact Stuart and get your tickets. We are also planning a Christmas party at the Lant. Further information to follow on that. There will of course be Tennis and Tipples on the Dec 27th where we will be officially opening the new court 3. Let's also not forget the lovely afternoon we enjoyed at the strawberry tea where over a £1,000 was raised for a cancer charity. Many thanks to Patrick and Karen for organising that.

As ever I'm indebted to my fellow committee members for all their time, help and support over the last 12 months. I'd particularly like to mention Judith who despite a major operation and hopping round on crutches for the last six weeks has still produced the final accounts and financial projections while still effectively managing our money. Paul who has managed the planning and tender process while writing the ever more complex specifications required for court 3. Finally, I'd like to mention Jackie Bland who is stepping down as membership secretary. Jackie has been in the role for several years, it's one of the principal roles in the club. While under her watch she has automated the process greatly but it still requires almost daily activity to keep it ticking over smoothly. She has been a great servant to the club always ready with a smile and a comment when clubspark, the payment system, or even a member fails to behave. We, as a club, are greatly in her debtand she's done all that while not even being a tennis player!! So, thank you Jackie it's because of selfless people like you that this club is where it is today.

So, in conclusion, our membership is growing significantly. We are making a bigger surplus than ever which of course is being reinvested into the club at a faster rate. We have more teams in more leagues playing competitive tennis than we have ever done. Our Men's first team are in the top tier of local tennis again and new members and younger players are coming through in both Ladies and Men's teams. It's been a tough couple of years but the future's looking very good.

Chris Rhodes

Chairman