



2024 - A year in view

This has been a year dominated by the topic of the Clubhouse which is now close to fruition. Life however has also continued as normal with a comprehensive schedule of activities that are covered further below. Additional detailed information is on the website - all reports can be found by following the clickable link [Annual General Meeting \(AGM\) November 16 2024](#)

At the 2023 AGM the first outline of a possible project and some very rough costings were tabled; following a lengthy debate, it was agreed to take a feasibility study forward and, when it was complete, hold an EGM for members to decide whether they wished to proceed.

At the same time, we applied for, and were successful in obtaining, a grant of £25,000 from the UK Government and South Norfolk District Council through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This funding was transformational in that it allowed us to upscale our proposals and incorporate an accessible toilet into the scheme. When members had been initially consulted there had been a very strong lobby for a toilet, so this was a very satisfactory development.

The promised EGM was subsequently arranged and, following an emphatic vote in favour of the Clubhouse, work on the project began in earnest with the submission of the planning application. This took a number of months to reach its conclusion, overcoming a number of objections and jumping through hoop after hoop before the consent was finally granted.

We also needed Anglian Water's consent to connect to the drainage network. Whilst this was forthcoming, the approval was subject to more onerous connection requirements than

anticipated, which has resulted in what can only be described as major civil engineering works being carried out. Thanks to the expertise of our contractor, however, the connection has been made and as I write this backfilling is now being carried out.



Contractors are now pressing on with their work and all being well the project will be complete by the end of November/beginning of December 2024.

We have been working to a gross budget of just over £80,000, with the grant of £25,000 reducing the cost to the club to circa £55,000 and are currently on target to be close to this figure; subject to agreeing final accounts with the various contractors.

I must highlight the quality we have been able to achieve in the Clubhouse, which is being finished to a high standard and is fully insulated and heated, making it suitable for all year round use. Superior Garden Buildings, a South Norfolk based firm, have included a number of free upgrades as we have agreed that they can use it as a show building. They will also give a 10% discount off any of their buildings when purchased by a club member. I obtained five different quotations for the Clubhouse building itself and could not get near the value for money we have achieved with any other supplier.

Finally, once the whole project is complete we will have fundamentally upgraded our facility to meet modern expectations with the Clubhouse acting as a focal point at the centre of the facility. We will also have linked the courts via the new internal footpath, provided a coded gate access system and an accessible toilet. This will allow us to develop social and coaching opportunities to the benefit of all of our members and of course attract new players to the club who will be able to enjoy these first rate enhancements.

This is going to be a very exciting time for our club!

Membership

Membership dipped at the beginning of the new year. However with much promotion by Sally this has risen steadily over the last six months with the 200 mark being hit a matter of days ago - 166 adult/senior/young adult/student members and 34 juniors. This compares with 171 adult members and 55 juniors in the previous membership year. We are greatly encouraged by the growth in numbers since March and, with NTA running and marketing coaching courses, we see this trend continuing, particularly with the Clubhouse coming on stream going into next year.

Grass Courts

In carrying out the Clubhouse project, the committee has been very aware of the situation with the grass courts and how best to go forward. As previously advised, there would be no conversion of the grass courts to an all weather surface without proposals being submitted to members, some of whom would like to see this sooner rather than later and some who would prefer not to see it at all.

Currently, the club does not have funds to contemplate such a development and we will need to investigate what options, if any, may be open to us. In the meantime, we need to ensure we use the existing surface to the maximum benefit of members.

Upon completion of the Clubhouse we will still have a full size grass court, together with a mini red court. The committee has accordingly decided to continue with improving these, working with the groundsman from Cromer Tennis Club, who is highly regarded. The remaining full size court will be relocated slightly to increase the side run off areas and even out the run offs at the ends of the court. This should, in itself, improve the playing experience whilst further work in relation to scarifying, feeding and seeding should make for a better playing surface.

Club sessions

Club sessions continue to be a key part of our offering with four organised sessions on Monday and Saturday mornings and Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

Saturday morning sessions are currently being adversely affected by the car parking/congestion issues arising out of the enormous popularity of the junior football sessions that run at the park. We have raised this as an issue with the Parish Council. However, to date there is no indication that they wish to become involved, taking the view that parking is on a first come first served basis. We are currently waiting to see if some of the footballers transfer to the new facility at St Giles Park which had been suggested as happening in November..... further developments are awaited.

Evening sessions have seen variable levels of attendance. However, we will continue to promote these through the winter; a recent poll of those attending saw demand very even between Tuesday and Thursday evenings. As a result, two courts will be reserved for these club nights through to the end of the year when we will review further depending on the appetite for winter evening tennis. There is now one What's App group for Club nights to

assist members in organising their attendance and everyone interested is encouraged to join with a view to increasing numbers.

The Monday morning events continue to be popular, with support from members when Kevin is unable to be in attendance.

Events

The club ran a full programme of events starting with the Quiz in March, ably organised by Paul and Neil Henery and running on through the year from the traditional serve off followed by the individual Sunday tournaments, the team tennis event and finals day. The awards evening took place in October to celebrate achievements in the previous twelve months. Tina Macmillan & Giles Davey were worthy joint winners of the player of the year award for their outstanding contribution to the club - well deserved and well done to both of them.

Thanks to Fraser and Holly for organising again for what we hope will now become an annual event.

Competitive tennis

Teams

The stand-out performance of the summer was again from the men's A team, who finished as Champions of the top division in the City League for the second year in succession, an unprecedented achievement for the club and a reflection of the quality of players who represented us in this team: Ollie Palmer, Will Foster, James Henery, Jack Edwards, Joe Philpott, Louis Armstrong-Brown, Amy Partridge, Neil Henery and Dan Moye.

The men's B team finished runners up in the second division which was a highly commendable achievement. The men's C team finished third in division three where they will be joined next year by the men's D team, who had a terrific season under non-playing captain David Stephenson, finishing as champions of division 4. The men's E team finished mid-table in division 7 and provided opportunities for many players who might otherwise not have been able to experience match tennis.

The ladies' A and B teams in the Norwich City league finished mid-table in the first and second divisions respectively, while the ladies' C team finished in third place in division five, only two points short of promotion. The stand-out individual performance was from Lea Denley, who played matches not only for the ladies' A and B teams but also for the men's D team as part of their promotion push.

In summary, it is clear that team tennis is currently on a high in the club and as a result it has proved quite a squeeze to fit all the matches in. However, as ever, we continue to try and respond to member demand by offering as many competitive opportunities as possible.

For information on all teams follow the AGM link.

S & P Summer Tournament

The main summer tournament was once again very well supported, with a very enjoyable

finals day being held in early September. Once again, we were blessed with very good weather which was ideal for tennis. One particular mention for the winner of the men's singles - James Henery, just 16, but a thoroughly deserved winner! We organised refreshments from a gazebo, with matches being viewed from the grass courts. This proved a very successful approach and we look forward to next year when we have the added enhancement of the Clubhouse.

For full information on the S&P and winners follow the AGM link.

Box Leagues

Box leagues have continued to be popular over the last year with one round of matches in Autumn 2023 and another in Spring 2024. Autumn 2024 matches are currently underway. Between fifty and sixty players have competed in each of the various rounds which is around one third of the adult members of the club. For information on the Box leagues follow the AGM link.

Coaching

It has been very much a transitional year in relation to coaching with previous coach Katie leaving the club at short notice following last year's AGM. This left us in a situation where we did not have a coach for the second half of the winter. However, all was not quiet during this period. The sub-committee was very proactive in seeking new coaching arrangements and identified the National Tennis Association as an organisation who we felt had the right approach for club members. Following a period of quite intense discussion and negotiation it was agreed to proceed with NTA as our provider. Jenny Chambers was able to bring her expertise to bear in finalising this agreement with NTA which allowed coaching to recommence in April. The first six months working with NTA has been very encouraging, contributing over £600 to club funds. We now have adult coaching groups running as well as juniors, which is a welcome development in meeting member demand for coaching. We look forward to seeing this relationship develop and bring real benefit to the club. The full Coaching report is available via the AGM link.

Thank you

Finally a big thank you to all committee members who are standing for re-election and to Mandy Bailey who is standing down from the committee but, we are pleased to report, remaining in her role as one of our welfare officers. I must also mention our event organisers, team captains and volunteers for their involvement and input in the continuing success of the club. Without you we could not run the events, teams and competitions that we do so successfully.

Committee

Chair Chris Mitchell, Hon Secretary Fraser MacMillan, Hon Treasurer Kevin Woolrich, Membership Secretary Sally Hardwick, Jenny Chambers, Paul Henery, Chris Hardwick, Holly Setchell.