

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Welcome to the 71st Annual General Meeting of Heswall Lawn Tennis Club Ltd and thank you for attending.

During the last year the club has been very busy and continues to thrive. The club's present membership remains at a healthy level of 442 members, comprising 286 adults and 156 juniors. This is a small reduction of our membership total of 454 this time last year. I was concerned that the club would suffer a larger drop in membership in view of the financial pressures on members from the high inflation and increased mortgage rates. Therefore, it has been pleasing that in the circumstances members have continued to support the club and enjoy all that it has to offer. Welcome to our new members who have joined during the year and thank you to our longstanding members for their continued commitment to the club. It is great to see the number of families at the club with both parents and their children as playing members. Thank you to Ann Crowther with support from other committee members, particularly Sue Orrell, in handling the club's membership function. A review has been carried out as to how we use our ClubSpark membership system and following this AGM members will shortly receive a message outlining the changes for the coming season.

On a sadder note, I record the deaths this year of former members – Pat Tarbuck and Ian Gearing.

In addition to myself, three committee members are not standing for re-election. I should like to thank Kate McCall, Laura Myers and Chris Keggin for all their efforts during the last

two years in their roles of Senior Tennis Representative, Junior Secretary and Bar Secretary respectively.

Kate has worked hard to organise the club's teams in the various competitions and the successful club summer tournaments which culminated in a super Senior Finals Day last September. Also, in September the club successfully hosted the prestigious Wirral Tankard Finals Day which went very well.

Laura has supported Head Coach Sue Davies and leaves the Junior section in very good shape. Friday junior nights were really busy with record numbers of juniors attending and being well supported by their parents, particularly in the bar. My thanks too to Sue Orrell and Nikki Keggin for all their work on Fridays and to all the team managers of the various junior age group teams.

Thank you, Chris for all you have done in ensuring that the bar has been well run and provided a very good service to members. You leave the bar in good order for our new Clubhouse & Bar Steward, Nigel Davies, to take over its running.

Our courts and grounds remain in very good condition. We received many compliments from visiting clubs regarding the condition of the courts and how well they play. I know too that our members appreciate our courts and the lovely environment we enjoy at the club. Thank you to our Grounds Secretary, Sue Orrell, to our groundsman, Paul Joynes and to our volunteer gardeners for all their work.

Nicola Roberts, our Social Secretary, has put in a lot of effort, together with Sally Ann Buckle and their helpers, to organise the club's social events. We have enjoyed various tennis tournaments – 'Wimbledon Fever', Tinsel and Bobble Hat – a Race Night and a

'Summer Soiree' party with pizza provided from an outside oven and salads made by members. Club Finals Day was a great success socially and thank you to members who supported the event in providing food and cakes and to Chris Keggin for organizing a downstairs pop-up bar which proved to be very popular.

Also, it was great to see Inspector Dick, Head of Wirral CID, make an appearance in a very entertaining Murder Mystery produced by Roger and Judy Hughes and supported by the club's finest acting talent. Finally, thank you to Tom Pridgeon for organizing a lively Quiz Night and compering it so well.

Whilst our social events are important in bringing members together, they are of course important fund raisers for the club. In this respect, thank you very much to Gilli Sandman and to her helpers for raising approximately £1,600 for the club from two bridge drives.

Tom Evans has very competently ensured that all the club's welfare and safeguarding policies and procedures are up to date and made a presentation to the Committee of the LTA's video on the subject. Thank you, Tom.

In July four Committee members resigned after a majority of the Committee had voted against a plan to instal solar panels on the clubhouse roof. I should like to pay tribute to the contributions that Melanie Sullivan, Jennie Russell, Fiona Hughes and Phil Lindley made during their time on the Committee. The management of the club's finances permitting the renovation of six courts and the bar refurbishment, its governance ensuring our annual LTA registration and renewal of our licences, maintaining the good condition of the clubhouse, the purchasing of a document storage system and subsequent storage electronically of the club's important documents and the first ever major servicing of the

floodlights are testament to their work. Also, Barbara Leake stepped down from the Committee after many years of service. Going back, we should remember that Barbara was the treasurer of the nursery at the club and the organiser of many children's parties.

My thanks to Martin Bloor, Annette Small and Mark Peter for agreeing to join the Committee mid-year on a co-opted basis in accordance with the club's Articles of Association as Treasurer, Company Secretary and House Secretary respectively. Whilst, of course, it is not ideal to lose experienced Committee members, on the other hand it opens the door for new ideas and new skills which is so important for any organisation. Mark has brought a great deal of IT and digital knowledge and commercial experience to the Committee which has worked well in combination with Annette's deep knowledge of the club and Martin's experience as a past treasurer. Thank you too to Debbie Peter for supporting Mark with looking after the clubhouse.

The Committee issued an informative Newsletter to members in November in which we mentioned the plan to employ a Clubhouse & Bar Steward. As recently announced, Nigel Davies has been appointed to this position. Other important changes have been to modernise our financial systems with the implantation of a POS system. Payments for social events, match fees and all other items, except for membership, can now be made on this online system thereby enabling much better tracking and reporting. The POS system links directly to our Accountants' Quickbooks software.

As always, thank you to the members, not on the Committee, who carry out important roles for the club. Without you the club would not function.

The Social Mix-In tennis on Saturday afternoons and Wednesday evenings remain as core activities for both longstanding members and our new members. My thanks to Sue Guest for leading the Saturday afternoons and organising the teas and to Annette Small for leading the Wednesday evenings and organising the suppers afterwards with the help of members lead by Judy Hughes.

Thank you too to our captains of the various teams entered in the Wirral League, Chester League, Wirral Tankard and other competitions, to Julie Risely for her administrative support to our Wirral League entries and to Sue Paton for her membership of the Wirral League Committee which ensures that the club's interests are well represented. Thanks are due also to Ann George and Ian Wilson for organising the Thursday evening friendly matches which were very much enjoyed by our players. Thank you too to Penny Robinson for organizing the floodlight schedules during the winter and the distribution of the tokens for the lights.

This year a special mention for David Jones who produced a comprehensive 'Insurance Questionnaire Compliance' report to assist the completion of our annual Risk Assessment and Action Plan. This is required to enable the club to fulfil our annual LTA registration without which we would be unable to continue operating as a tennis club. Based on David's report, together with the findings of a comprehensive Fire Risk Assessment report, we have a plan for the changes and improvements for the clubhouse and grounds which will be implemented over the coming year. Work has started with a recent major 'tidy up' of the clubhouse and the purchase of a locked cabinet for the storage of bleach and other harmful cleaning materials. Included in the plan, for example, are new gutters for the clubhouse as the present ones are not capable of dealing with the heavier rainfall

we are now experiencing. All of this work is also essential in meeting the conditions of our property insurance – the policy document is over 70 pages!

Whilst we have the members of the Committee and other club members who contribute so much of their time to the running of the club, we are short of volunteers and we do need more members to step forward – especially to serve on the Committee. If that does not happen, I think that it is perhaps inevitable that in the future the club will have to employ an Administrator.

The tennis at the club continues to be underpinned by the coaching which is available to all members. My thanks to our club coaches - Sue Davies, Andy Wilkinson and Owen Kirkham. From the u/8s and upwards to the seniors, competitively and socially, we have a culture in the club of high standards and performance that will stand us in good stead for the future. It is always encouraging to see how many of our members wish to improve their tennis by having coaching lessons. I should like to mention, in particular, the Tennis Express courses for beginners which have proved successful in attracting new members.

We continue to serve the outside hirers of the clubhouse. We are grateful for continued support of the Barbara Simons Dance School – thank you, Barbara. The bookings for hire of the bar and Palmer Room for evening functions and daytime funeral wakes has increased. Our hirers have given us great feedback regarding the quality of the facilities and the warm welcome they received in dealing with their enquiries and for the services on the days of their events. To date in 2024 we have hosted two 50<sup>th</sup> birthday parties for which the combined bar takings were approximately £2,000. We are planning to attract more of this business with the appointment of the new Clubhouse & Bar Steward. There is much scope to increase our income from the hire of the clubhouse facilities.

The Club's finances are healthy. As at the end of January, we had approximately £107,000 in our bank accounts. The cash, which we do not need for immediate purposes and including our sink fund for court renewals, is held in two high interest accounts with 35 and 95 notice periods. At current rates we would expect to earn over £3,000 in interest during the next 12 months. However, we should remember that the renewal of the carpet of just one court will cost in the region of £25 – 30,000 and the club is going to have to spend more money on the clubhouse, in particular, if we are to maintain the quality of its condition. Therefore the club does need to continue to make an operating profit each year in order to fund all the work that will be needed in the future.

The Committee has tried to do its best in communicating matters to members. Thank you to Neil Elsby for sending emails out to members and uploading documents on the website and to Sue Orrell for updating information on the website. Thank you too to Chris Marr for his imaginative and colourful posters for club events.

Very important now to the club for its communication and also business development is our social media. Our Facebook and Instagram accounts have over 800 and 1,000 followers respectively. Our social media posts for Facebook and Instagram are organised by Nicola Roberts and Sally Ann Buckle respectively. Thank you both for all your work. The aim is to keep the followers advised of club day-to-day activities and planned events as well as highlighting the competitive achievements of our juniors and seniors. Our social media generates many enquiries about tennis lessons, membership and room hire. Various local businesses support club events through sponsorship and donating raffle prizes and in return we promote their enterprises on our social media.

Members do not need to have a Facebook account to see the club's social media posts. The posts can be viewed simply as a website – just Google HLTC Facebook – to see the photographs and announcements.

As I come to the end of my presidency of the club, I believe that there is every reason for members to feel positive about the club and its long-term future.

Finally, I should like to thank my wife Sue for all her support during the last two years.

Thank you for listening.

Andrew Paton

President

February 2024



