



Newsletter

Issue 1 Winter 2021-22

WELCOME from Club Chair, Jenny Nicol

I am very happy to help launch the rebooted Club Newsletter. Thanks to everyone who has contributed and to Alastair Flint in particular for making it happen. COVID has robbed us of many of the events that gather members together and the newsletter will help keep everyone in touch.

Most importantly, this newsletter is for YOU, Club Members, so please let Alastair have any items and suggestions for future material at ajflint@outlook.com

RECORD HIGH MEMBERSHIP

The Club is in good shape in terms of membership and finances. Membership is at an all-time high of 326 adults and juniors. At the AGM we congratulated our Head Coach Richard Tennant on the successes of our top juniors in national and county competitions (see page 2). These successes will make the club even more attractive to aspiring young players as well as beginners. We are trying to organise a Junior Forum, of parents and junior players, to get feedback on how the club can continue to improve its offering to younger members.

FINANCES

Our growing membership contributed a subscription income of £30,314 in the last financial year. After club maintenance and overhead costs, we had a surplus of more than £16,000. This, together with the £3,500 raised by Alistair McGowan's much-appreciated benefit concert (see page 4), has enabled the committee to set up a substantial 'sinking fund' – money ring-fenced for major projects.

DRAINAGE

We have big work ahead, so this money and more will be needed. We have to address the drainage and standing water issue on the red artificial clay courts, 3 and 4; we have to be ready for possibly costly recoveries from the future inevitable floods; and we have to think about upgrading our halogen floodlights on 3 and 4 to the LED technology that is so successful on the green Astroturf courts, 2 and 5.

The immediate focus is on trying to resolve the drainage issues on 3 and 4. We have commissioned a detailed report from a testing laboratory and



consultancy specialising in sports surfaces. It provides an objective, factual assessment of the

foundation and carpets on courts 3 and 4. We are now obtaining quotes for the options open to us. Once the Committee has reviewed these, we will go out to members for a final decision.

COMMITTEE CHANGES

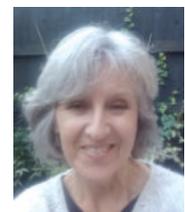
There have been a few changes to the Committee. Les Martin and Linda McMahon have stood down and Debbie Locke, Martyn Jones and Judy Knight have joined us. Martyn is the new Men's Captain and Judy has stepped into the new role of Social Secretary. Despite Covid, the benefits of Judy's work are already evident with a successful coffee morning, the Club Christmas party and effective promotion of Alistair's sold-out event.



Debbie



Martyn



Judy

RICHARD DIXON TOURNAMENT – YOUR IDEAS NEEDED

Many of you will remember Richard Dixon, who was a member for years, and who died tragically in 2018. In March, we're planning to hold another fund-raising fun tournament in his name. Members are invited to nominate a local charity to which the funds raised will be donated. The first Richard Dixon Tournament was in aid of MIND, the mental health charity. Please send your nomination, with a short explanation of why you want the Club to support the local charity, to ajflint@outlook.com by 10 January 2022.



BRILLIANT JUNIORS!

Our Junior players had some notable successes in 2021. We are very proud of their achievements. Who knows – they may be giving Emma Raducanu and Co a testing time before very long?! And they're certainly inspiring the club's growing numbers of juniors, all being coached by Richard Tennant.

Clara Hill, Imani Shah and Christian Vatahov all qualified and competed at the Under-14 'Road to Wimbledon' Championships at the home of tennis - the All England Club, Wimbledon in July. Fantastic!

Special congratulations go to:

Clara Hill, winner, Under 14s and Under 18s Girls Singles and the Under 14s, 16s and 18s Girls Doubles, Shropshire County Championships.

Imani Shah, winner, Under 16s Girls Singles and the Under 14s, 16s and 18s Girls Doubles in the Shropshire County Championships.

Christian Vatahov, runner-up Under 14s Boys Doubles, Hereford and Worcestershire County Championships.

Benjamin Wilderer, 3rd, Under 18s Mixed Doubles, Shropshire County Championships.



Imani (above), Clara and Christian at Wimbledon, and Ben (right).



SHROPSHIRE KO FINALISTS

Congratulations to our Mixed Doubles First team (above) - Chris Dowden, Linda McMahon (captain), Rhian Davies and Martyn Jones, who reached the Final of the McKenzie Shield. This is a prestigious county-wide knockout tournament, and along the way we saw off some strong opposition.

This is by far the best performance achieved by Ludlow Castle Tennis Club in this high-profile tournament. The final was played away against Shrewsbury Lawn Tennis Club.

JOHN NICKSON – TRIBUTES

John Nickson (below), an active member of the Club for many years, sadly died this year, aged 72. Here are tributes from Bob Purcell and Christine Hood

It was a great pleasure playing with and against John; not least because it was an excellent way of witnessing at close quarters his phenomenally secure backhand and wondering how to limit its effectiveness.

He was very generous in inviting members to play with him and Claire, and a fine host when a visit to his well appointed shed, to which he regularly retreated, was part of the entertainment; I remember this with some guilt as I only belatedly realised that this was an important part of his spiritual life.

– **Bob Purcell**



Photo courtesy Claire Nickson

Claire and John were good friends from 2009 when we used to meet up in Leominster for tennis every week. They moved from Bucknell to Kingsland in 2014 which was near my previous home, and so I often travelled with them to LCTC in the following years.

John was a very good tennis player. He played at County level but was always generous with complimenting club players. He played in the Club 1st team.

He was a great philosopher and followed several Buddhist teachers around the UK. He was a dear, kind man who always had a smile on his face. Such a sad loss...

Bob, Anne and I represented the Club at his funeral near Canterbury on October 1. We are in touch with Claire if anyone needs her contacts.

– **Christine Hood**

Happy landings for new arrivals at the club

From Teresa Pass:

"Have you sent an email yet?" asked my husband as we prepared for our move from south Birmingham to Brimfield. Having been a member of Hall Green, Wythall and then King's Heath tennis clubs over the past 25 years, after taking up the sport quite late in life, I wanted to contact what could be my new 'local' club, the Ludlow Castle Tennis Club.



encroaching on the quiet, idyllic pastures of Shropshire, i.e. the hallowed courts of LCTC.

Having sent an email to the generic 'Contact Us' address on the website, I received a prompt reply from Chair Jenny who advised that I should attend social on a Thursday evening once we'd moved, which I did. Suffice to say the welcome from everyone that evening was incredibly warm and friendly, without exception.

I love my tennis, especially doubles, but was slightly nervous as to what kind of welcome I'd get – a loud, gregarious Irish-born "Brummie" (ahhhhhhh, many of you will now know exactly who has written this!)

Since that evening in late June, I've been playing two, three, sometimes four times a week – much to my husband's delight (!) – invited by various group leaders. If I wanted, I could play every day. It's been amazing.

From Wayne Garrick:

Joining a new tennis club can be somewhat daunting. First of all, how does your game compare with others, and are there cliques? All of this flows through your mind as you exit your car in the car park and walk towards the courts.

None of this was a worry in reality, as the second I came into contact with a member of the club, they did nothing but make me feel welcome and included. It's been this way with everyone I have met.

Having previously been a member of another club, supporting only two courts and many members, I was looking for somewhere I could turn up and play and not be left on the side lines waiting between games for countless minutes. At Ludlow Castle Tennis Club there is organisation and sensitivity. I feel I have been embraced into the fold, even though I may turn up looking like I fell through a rainbow!! (Those who have met Wayne will know exactly what he means!!)

From Debbie Locke:

We moved from Sussex to Shropshire about a year ago and before settling on Ludlow I checked out the tennis club. It was really important to me to have a social and welcoming club since we knew no-one in the immediate area.

I joined just after lockdown. It was such a welcome relief to get out on the courts and the members couldn't have been more hospitable. What struck me about Ludlow Castle Tennis Club is the eclectic mix of people coming not just from Shropshire but all corners of the country. As a result the club has a very open and diverse community where people quickly support you into the fold. I attended 2-3 social sessions a week and then found myself being invited into other privately organised sessions. So within a short time the tennis club became an important fixture in my diary and I am now struggling to juggle play around our house renovations!



My husband has never been a confident tennis player but I persuaded him to join and I assured him, "you won't be

the worse player on the court". I lied! But now he's stopped watching the Castle's resident Peregrine Falcon whirling above us during play - and with some brilliant coaching from Richard Tennant - he has a good serve and a very decent forehand. The range of playing abilities is another attractive side of the club. The social sessions give you an opportunity to play with others better than you - particularly on Thursday Ladies Nights where Chris Hood does a fantastic job of ensuring that each 4 has a very tight match. I've signed up to the internal competitions and even played a couple of external matches for the B team.

LCTC has made our move to Shropshire so much more fun - we've made some great friends who have given us great hospitality including a week in the Algarve with fellow LCTC newcomers Gladys and Stephen. All we need now is to import the Algarve's winter sunshine to Shropshire!

Above, from left – Gladys Rhodes, Darrell Locke, Debbie Locke, Steve White.

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU PAY YOUR GUEST FEES

If you bring a guest or guests to play, please remember to pay your £5 adult or £2 Under-18 fees for each guest into an envelope on the blue box in the rear foyer of the clubhouse. Guests can play up to 3 times, after that they are expected to join. Guest fees make a significant contribution to the club's income, helping keep membership fees down and contributing towards maintenance and running costs.

ALISTAIR McGOWAN – THE PIANO (and tennis) SHOW

What a marvellous evening at the Ludlow Assembly Rooms on November 6, as the famous impressionist Alistair McGowan combined laugh-out-loud comedy with some surprisingly sensitive piano playing. This sell-out concert was a bumper fund-raiser for the Club, bringing in around £3,500.

Alistair is himself a keen tennis player and member of the Club, and lives in Ludlow. We're enormously grateful to him for staging this concert, and it was good to see many members of LCTC in the audience.

The Club Chair, Jenny Nicol, welcomed Alistair, and he launched into a volley of jokes and brilliant impressions. Among the well-known voices were Monty Don, presenter of Gardeners' World, the two Johns – Major and Humphrys – and some very convincing Brummie accents (or should that be Black Country?) from Frank Skinner. Gareth Southgate, Roy Hodgson, Revd Richard Coles.....the list of personalities given the 'Alistair McGowan treatment' was a long one. On the theme of tennis, we heard amusing conversations with Roger Federer, Andy Murray and Novak Djokovic. The portrayal of Andy in



Alistair with club chair Jenny Nicol

particular was a masterpiece. Alistair wowed us with his grasp of languages – he gave a stunning impression of Roger Federer giving a press interview in three languages simultaneously!

Interspersed with the comedy impressions were the piano pieces. Alistair learned to play the piano only 8 years ago, yet he showed touch and sensitivity in all the classical gems we enjoyed. As well as works by famous composers such as Greig and Bach, Alistair played

beautiful music by modern composers who deserve to be better known, including Madeleine Dring, Erik Satie and Philip Glass. A good many of the piano pieces were played from memory, and a welcome encore rounded off a uniquely special evening.

The Piano Show was a superb performance, with Alistair McGowan demonstrating a rare talent, combining as he did, vocal impressions, comedy and classical piano recitals. As a result, Ludlow Castle Tennis Club has benefitted to the tune of £3,500, and we're so appreciative of Alistair's generosity and to the Club members who supported the concert.

– Alistair Flint

Return of the club's Christmas party



A mouth-watering buffet of authentic Indian food, a welcoming bar and some energetic dancing (by the ladies, anyway) to work it off – these were key ingredients of the club's Christmas party. About 50 members and guests attended the event in the clubhouse on December 4. Big thanks to Judy Knight and her team for planning the party and transforming the venue into a wonderfully welcoming setting with some top quality catering.

CHECK OUT THE DEFIBRILLATOR...

Should the worst happen and someone collapses on court (or elsewhere!!), please be aware that we have a defibrillator on the side of the clubhouse. The machine is designed to be used by anyone, with no medical knowledge needed. In an emergency the defibrillator 'talks you through' exactly what to do to help revive someone who has collapsed.



LOCK UP, PLEASE!

Please keep the courts secure by always locking them after you've played. This is vital at the end of games and social sessions – don't just stroll away. Likewise, keep the clubhouse we share with the Bowls section secure by always locking it. Once you've shut the front door, turn the knob **fully anti-clockwise** – you will hear the bolt slide across. Thank You!

