

RAMSBURY TENNIS CLUB

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2020/21

This is my first report as club chairman and it covers an anything but normal year. Just days after the 2020 AGM the club was forced to close as the country entered the first lockdown in response to the spread of Coronavirus, and the pandemic has provided the backdrop to events at the club for the remainder of the year.

Shortly following the closure of the club in March the resurfacing of courts 1 and 2 with artificial clay was completed, and members were forced to observe from a distance the pristine new surface in glorious weather through April until the progressive resumption of tennis activity was permitted from mid May. The attraction of the newly re-surfaced courts - the first such courts at a Wiltshire club - coupled with continuing restrictions on other sport and leisure activities and an increase in people working from home or simply staying local led to a further significant increase in membership during the year. The club is hugely grateful for the continuing efforts of the Membership Secretary Chris Snelling, and of course Elizabeth, in maximising the conversion of expressions of interest to membership and handling the resulting administrative burden. We now have over 360 members of all ages.

Ian Smith continued as Treasurer and his report is elsewhere on the agenda. In addition to that, members will join me in thanking Ian for his oversight of the facilities during the year, not least the successful re-surfacing of courts 1 and 2. Enhanced cleaning and other safety measures were also introduced to help protect players from the virus.

The increased membership and the need to get outdoors during the crisis has seen many more people playing tennis more frequently and the club has been busier than ever, when open. One example of this has been the dramatic turnaround in popularity of the Sunday morning club sessions. Unfortunately, we are now enduring the third period of closure in a year, but I am pleased that we can at last look forward to re-opening at the end of March in time for the start of the new season.

Sadly the restrictions imposed to counter the virus meant that we were unable to hold a programme of social events, and of course Wimbledon was cancelled, but official competitive tennis was able to resume for a period: a delayed club tournament was run successfully by Melissa Brown for the first time, with an increase in entries over 2019; Charles Gardner continued to organise the singles ladder, from his unplanned exile in Sydney, Australia, and a winter version attracted increased participants before the November lockdown; and while the summer league was abandoned, the winter league matches did start for a while, organised once again by David Langton, supported by Clare Allman. Thank you to all of them.

Coaching recommenced in the summer, and more fully in September when the schools went back, but it has inevitably been severely disrupted this year. It seems there is no shortage of demand for coaching, whether adult or junior, individual or group, which is a huge tribute to the skills of the coaching team led by our excellent head coaches Lewis and Catherine Fletcher. Lewis was County Coach of the Year and Catherine won Coach of the Year at the 2020 National Deaf Sports Personality of the Year Awards, and we are grateful to them for their continued support at a tough time. Thanks also to Roger Henry for continuing to champion the juniors alongside many other tasks!

Thank you to all of my fellow committee members for their efforts during the year, and for helping the club deal with the unexpected circumstances we have all endured. Finally, Richard Handover is retiring from the committee this year after stepping down as chairman in 2020, and we thank him for his work on the committee over the years.

Chris Wilson
March 2021