

## **Redbourn Tennis Club Annual Report for 2020**

Welcome to the Redbourn Tennis Club AGM and our review of the 2020 season.

Your Committee has undergone a number of changes over the last twelve months and is still operating without a formally elected Chair. None of the Committee wished to put their names forward for the position and so Tim Moss agreed to act as Interim Chair in the absence of anyone wishing to put their name forward. We continue to be grateful for the participation of members in the management of the club. Over the past year Brian Gunson, Julia Hanson, Dave Ellis, Philippa Webb, Claire Johnson, and Kathryn Males have retired from the Committee after having devoted many hours of their free time supporting various activities in the club, from membership, to treasury, organising Tournaments, mix ins and social events and establishing the crucial safe framework for Covid 19 safe play. We would like to formally register our thanks to them for their brilliant support.

We are also grateful for other members stepping up to help and we have as a consequence a relatively inexperienced Committee (with the honourable exception of Peter Jewell of course!). The committee have different skills and experience to the previous members, and we are working hard to backfill our knowledge in the key areas. The committee changes also meant that we no longer had the expertise to manage the Hitssports website platform which the club had used effectively for some years and we needed therefore a new Treasurer, Secretary, IT Chief, Membership Secretary, Social Secretary and Chair.

2020 was of course the year that never happened for most of our normal activities. We had periods of tennis being banned, periods of singles only, no team matches, no playing without booked courts and of course social distancing meaning that there was none of RTC's normal friendly chat before, after and during our games. Play stopped abruptly on March 23<sup>rd</sup> with the first lockdown and no tennis was possible until May. We must also offer our thanks to the Telephone booking team, who set up, organised, and staffed the operation for seven months of the year. Our volunteers who stood by the phone through thick and thin were as follows:- Peter & Margaret Jewell, Julia Hanson, Brian Gunson, Maria Allen and Dot White and without them we would not have been able to play. May brought a completely new situation for the club and the committee formed an important subgroup of Julia Hanson, Brian Gunson and Dave Ellis who put together comprehensive play guidelines interpreting the information from government and the LTA. These guidelines have enabled the club to offer safe play at Redbourn whenever we have been permitted on court. To date we have not recorded any instance of play at Redbourn leading to Covid 19 transmission and this has been thanks to the thorough nature of the guidelines and the good compliance shown by our members in relation to play at the club. The Committee remain grateful to Brian, Dave and Julia for their diligence and hard work in this regard. We also continue to be grateful to Dot White our faithful Milk monitor who makes sure that the clubhouse is supplied week in week out!

The Covid 19 guidelines have led to a reduction in play at the club especially during the periods where we have been restricted to singles play only. We are working on ways to incentivise enjoyable singles play should this be the only authorised format over coming months. The return of socially distanced and planned doubles games in the summer was hugely welcome. Many members got into the routine of booking and playing regular matches during the week and at weekends. For some people working from home gave a greater opportunity to play during daylight hours, but for others the absence of our normal mix-ins, which allowed last minute impulse play, removed a significant opportunity to get out on court.

Your Committee remains focussed first and foremost on providing safe play in line with government and LTA guidelines for our members. This means assessing the particular risks relating to tennis at our club and putting in place proportionate measures that address those risks. Your committee also recognises that tennis can play an important role in physical and mental wellbeing and that encouraging higher levels of aerobic fitness in particular is deemed to be a positive factor in fighting the virus. We cannot emphasise enough, however, that the biggest risk in relation to tennis at our club remains insufficiently distanced social contact before, after and during play and this must continue to be a key focus until we know that the Vaccines have done their job.

We were delighted to be able to offer a return to some competitive tennis in September with the Bounceback tournament and the high number of entries in all three competitions showed how keen members were to get back to competitive play. It took some organisation to get games played without our normal format of offering a competition day, but nonetheless the matches were all played through with the exception of injury causing a delay to the mixed final. We would like to thank Peter, Maria and Lizzie for their organisation of the event and also their organisation of the very effectively operated socially safe finals day.

Your Committee remains keen to understand what is important to you our members and we received feedback from number of members following our consultation. The main themes were support for more mix in sessions with focus on differing abilities, more support for Junior events, support for looking at provision of floodlights, more winter events and teams and incentives for encouraging younger members to join. There was also strong support from members to move to safe use of adjacent courts for doubles play when this was permitted by regulations. Support for the return of mix-ins was shown by 26 members joining the (currently suspended due to lockdown) Sunday morning mix-in WhatsApp group.

As a consequence, your Committee plans to introduce more mix-in sessions maintaining “all welcome” sessions, but also adding session focussed on less experienced players gaining confidence playing competitive games. The plan is to get a more steady, more experienced player to join these groups in order to help provide support. We have six volunteers already , but more would be much appreciated! We hope to re-launch our Friday afternoon/evening Junior sessions trying to get a wider range of ages and to test monthly BBQ's when permitted to add a social dimension. We will review the financial and practical feasibility of a floodlight application. We are following the success of the Salisbury Tennis Club's application which is also in a challenging residential area, but the total cost of the project to light three courts has been £43,000 and therefore requires careful consideration. We are also planning to run more events through the year as well as participating in more winter teams' leagues to give a boost to our levels of winter participation.

Interestingly the concept of being able to book courts appears to be broadly supported by members although this was on the assumption of a move to online booking and the ability to book courts any time. As a consequence, we plan to retain a no cost booking system even in a post COVID-19 restriction environment.

The requirement to change the IT platform of the club allowed us to look at the alternative in the market to Hitssports and the obvious route was via Clubspark supported by the LTA. The platform is designed for tennis clubs and is used by an increasing number of clubs in the UK. There is no cost for the system unless you use the online membership payments systems where a fee of between 1 and 2% of the fees is charged. If we moved over to this membership system, the total annual cost would be similar to the annual cost of the Hitssports site. We reviewed the costs and design of other suppliers who offered similar functionality at significantly higher cost. As a consequence, we decided

to move over to Clubspark as soon as possible as we couldn't guarantee Hitssports technical support. The system offers a website hosting platform, a court booking system, membership module and email facility. The system can be tailored to some extent to our needs and is reasonably simple to understand and implement. At this stage all we have done is move over the basic information that was on the old site along with our new booking rules. To date courts have been booked successfully and the feedback from members has been excellent. We still have a residual number of members who have been invited to register but haven't yet done so. These are most likely players who don't play in the winter and as a consequence it is not a priority for them, but we do need to get everyone on board with the system for the season and so we will have further initiatives to encourage participation. The system also allows us to quickly update news and events and ideally allow us to slightly reduce our reliance on email communications which has been an issue for some members. One nice feature of the system is the ability to see statistics on court usage over time helping us to understand how effective we are at getting our members out on court!

The Club continues to be run on a non-profit basis and with the help of volunteers. We operate a sinking fund for major expenditure item such as the resurfacing and repainting of the courts. The sinking fund continues to be healthy but requires the addition of nearly £5000 annually, based on LTA figures for the costs of replacing hard courts. As a consequence, if we are to contemplate opportunities to improve such as floodlights, we do need to increase our overall fundraising. We continue to be affiliated to the LTA who have been invaluable this year with their Covid 19 guidance and public liability insurance cover as well as hopefully in 2021 seeing the return of events such as Great British Tennis Weekends (GBTW), and allocations of Wimbledon tickets.

Paul Jewell has stepped up to take over as Treasurer and he has done a great job successfully applying for grants and overseeing our finances. Paul will update you on the detail of our finances shortly, but we are grateful to St Albans District Council for the success of our two grant applications which have helped us this year. Lizzie Geeson has taken over the Membership role and has done a fantastic job loading all of member details onto the new Clubspark system. We have also deleted personal details from the old system. Lizzie will update you shortly on our membership numbers. We plan to start a new membership drive as soon as we can re-start tennis as we believe that there may be a window whilst people are restricted from many activities but allowed to play safe tennis. We want to make sure that people locally know where we are, what we offer and how they can join. We want to continue to highlight the unique selling points of RTC as a friendly accessible good value tennis club who will help you to have fun while improving your tennis. We have 34 junior members and 105 adult members split between individual and family memberships. Whilst we have had a financially successful year, we need to grow membership in order to generate sufficient sustainable income for the sinking fund.

There is little change to the quality of the court surfaces as play has been restricted this year although Court 1 is slightly more worn as it receives significantly more play than the other courts. We may see if we can use the booking system to slightly even out court usage over time if this is possible as this would save significant revenue in the long term. We are organising a spring pressure wash of the courts shortly. We are pleased with the success of padlocking of the courts, with codes available for members' use only. We have restricted the frequency of padlock number changes following member feedback and this has not resulted in a single incidence of unauthorised use, so we plan to continue relatively infrequent code changes.

As well as focussing on more mix ins in 2021, your committee wishes to focus on coaching. We would love to encourage players throughout the club to improve their skill and technique no matter when they last had a lesson! We especially want to provide a very accessible route for members to

transition from very rusty beginners through to regular mix in club players. We find that once members make this transition through to these popular sessions on Thursday evenings and Friday and Sunday mornings, they are much more likely to stay with us as members for many years. The one area that has gone from strength to strength in 2020 is Megan's cardio sessions. More and more people are signing up to these as they offer a great way to hit lots of tennis balls within fun activity sessions. We should emphasise that you can put as much or as little as you like into the sessions and you don't need to be Joe Wicks to participate! We would also love to drip the cardio sessions into the Friday morning mix ins so that we get even more play. These sessions have also helped less confident players see that in actual fact there is little difference between their standard and most other club members!

Hand in hand with this we want to encourage other members to sign up for coaching to improve their basic skills. There is a hard core in the club (of which I am one!) who view coaching as something for other players and we would love to turn this around and go further by running tactics sessions and drills with our team squads. Megan will update you further on coaching later.

We couldn't play any team games in 2020 but we plan to participate in 2021 in:

Watford and District Men's Doubles League – Paul Jewell captain

Watford and District Ladies Doubles League – Jenny Turkentine captain

Mixed Friendly League – Julia Hanson & Tim Moss

Orchard League – Philippa Webb captain

Ladies Senior Winter League – Dot White captain

Winter Mens League TBC

Winter Mixed League TBC

Having had a year with no social events in 2020 we need to wait and see what will be permitted in 2021 but if permitted we plan to run the Strawberry Tea Tournament on the August Bank Holiday Monday, the Finals Day supper in September and the annual Jingle Bells Tournament and Christmas Buffet in December. We would also like to consider running a monthly Sunday early evening BBQ and play if there is demand.

Overall, 2020 has been incredibly challenging for everyone, but the tennis that we have been allowed to play at our club has also for many of us been one of the few highlights and has helped to keep us sane during so many restrictions. Despite everything we have managed to make progress in many areas and continue to look forward to how we can run safe, fun and friendly tennis in 2021.

Thank you.

Tim Moss

Interim Chair

## **RTC Coaching Report 2020**

Like everything the coaching programme faced many challenges in 2020.

Unfortunately, after many weeks where tennis had to close its doors we were unable to run a junior coaching programme this year, as well as many other of our busy summer events.

However, it wasn't all bad, our intermediate, Refreshers and Beginners and Cardio sessions all got back up and running. The adults coaching programme was fully booked once it was safe to increase numbers and we added more sessions to the timetable to cope with demand. It was fantastic to see so many people playing tennis in a safe way. Tennis became recognised as a naturally socially distanced sport and with many people facing more time on their hands we welcomed new players to the club which was great to see!

Looking forward to 2021 I am excited as we take our first steps into online booking for coaching and can't wait to see the juniors back at the club again. As a coaching team, we are always open to new ideas so please do get in contact with any feedback you may have.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a massive thank you to all the committee for their hard work on what has been a very difficult year. With every challenge, we have faced they have found a way to both keep us safe and keep tennis going. Thanks also to the coaching team Jess and David for all their efforts doing whatever they can to grow the club. Final Thanks go to our members whose support has been massive when we have been allowed to coach as a coaching team we really appreciate it.

Fingers crossed for lots of exciting things ahead.

Megan Godfrey-Evans

Head Coach

## **Redbourn Tennis Club AGM – Treasurer's report**

I have great pleasure in presenting the Treasurer's report for the year 2020.

Firstly can I thank Claire Johnson for her time as club treasurer and handing over the accounts to me in good order and leaving detailed notes of the requirements and relevant contacts.

The response to the global pandemic has had a financial effect on all organisations and inevitably this includes the club. Overall income from subscriptions dramatically reduced by 47% coming in at £4,857. This was caused by the reduction in membership fees due to the first spring lockdown and the decrease in membership. The club also ring-fenced Junior membership in 2020 which meant that they kept their membership status and paid no fee, resulting in a further reduction in membership income compared to 2019. On the positive side, the club has benefited from two grants and a refund in 2020, one of £10,000 from St. Albans Council for Covid and a £332.81 grant from Redbourn Parish Council for our expenditure on solar lights and a music license. The refund received was from the LTA of £440 for the 2019 venue registration fee, refunded due to COVID relief. These grants and refund have meant that our income has actually increased from 2019 by 55% to £17,071.67. Despite paying back everyone who had paid to go the cancelled spring party, the club made a small profit on social events, however we are holding a prepayment of £1,366.11 on the caterer with the expectation, or maybe the hope, that we can use them for free at a future event which they have agreed to. The club had a coaching income of £150 in 2020. The club has also been successful in applying for a second Covid grant from the council in 2021 of £8,144.93.

The club's expenditure in 2020 was £7,521.51 increasing from 2019 by 12%. There was a small increase in Business rates, Water and Electricity of £59.40 and a small increase in insurance costs of £38.80 from 2019. The club has spent £3,280.75 on maintenance in 2020 which is an increase on 2019 by £2,236.60. The increase was mainly due to the court cleaning costs in February of £1,440. It has been decided to commission this service annually as increases the life of the courts and makes them more pleasant to play on. The amount the club spent on tennis balls was £445.28 decreasing from 2019 and we are now receiving an income from the sale of balls, £336 received in 2020.

We have made a profit in the year of £9,550.16 which has increased from £4,289.25 in 2019. Although this is good news and covers the required £4,800 transfer to the sinking fund, without the £10k grant the club would have made a loss. The challenge in 2021 is generate enough income where we at least hit breakeven point after the sinking fund has been transferred. The second COVID grant will obviously assist that but an increase in membership is needed for the club to be independently financially sound. The committee is also proposing that all future social events hit breakeven point. The club is fortunate at the moment to be in a good cash position without the imminent need to spend on court resurfacing which is obviously our biggest expense.

I would like to thank the committee in the way they have welcomed me into my new role and look forward to working with them throughout 2021. I would also like to thank Angela Barker our Chartered Accountant, for her assistance in reviewing and agreeing our accounts.

This completes my treasurer's report for 2020.

Paul Jewell.

Treasurer