

Report from the Chair - 2019/20

Another busy year, which although it ended with the difficulties associated with Covid 19 must still rate as a successful period.

We are lucky to be served by an enthusiastic group of people on the General Committee and thanks should go to each for their contributions throughout the year. The sport sections have also been well served by their officials; those who are willing to take on the extra roles necessary for the activities to take place. I would like to record thanks to those individuals. Further thanks are also directed to our newly established 'House' team who have taken on responsibility for the cleaning inside the clubhouse.

We remain in a healthy financial position. We have continued to service our loan to Nat West and income rose in comparison to 2018/19 whilst expenditure was reduced. This enabled us to record a reasonable profit on the year. Hall hire and subscriptions showed significant increases and it would be hoped to maintain similar levels in the future.

The Club benefitted from a grant from ECB (as part of their promotion of the Cricket World Cup) for £1000 which had to be spent on hospitality. We purchased two large 8 seater picnic benches, parasols, a coffee machine and installed a patio area at the top of the banking (giving viewing for both tennis and cricket). This was very well used during the Family Fun day in July. We also had a kind donation from a former member which enabled us to purchase a Defibrillator which will be permanently stored in the clubhouse.

Membership has continued to be encouraging, reaching 193 during the year - due in part to publicity efforts around the villages and in local press. The effort made by the club volunteers who posted notices through letter boxes, put them on noticeboards etc proved to be very worthwhile. It would be great to continue with membership numbers in this range in the future.

We had regular sessions for junior tennis and cricket on Tuesday evenings with pleasing attendance at both activities. Junior development was on show at the Family Fun day in July - where groups from Walton le Dale CC and Leyland CC provided the 'opposition' for the competitive aspects, as well as taking part in all the coaching. Again, thanks are due to all volunteers who made this possible. A good community event.

The bar continued to provide a steady income throughout the year. As a result of a Wine tasting evening we developed relationships with Barrica Wines and Beer Brothers - and we have been pleased to support local businesses whilst serving good quality produce. Pilates and yoga continued to be well attended throughout the year and few different social activities were tried - Art evenings ran monthly - and we had a couple of ad hoc table tennis evenings. The supper night in March was a great success and will probably be repeated in the future. Quiz night continued in its vein, producing a steady income as well as providing a good focal point for our members each month.

Our increased membership included a good number from the local community who showed a fair level of involvement with club activities. A particular highlight was the Village Carol Singing event which finished at the clubhouse with drinks and mince pies provided.

We moved further into the 21stC installing a Wifi system. This also enabled us to obtain a more sophisticated central heating controller, which can be programmed via the internet - an obvious benefit for those who do the controlling - no more going up to the club to put the heating on for a function, just do it from a phone. This was a particularly useful during the winter when we had the increased usage of the clubhouse by U3A during the day. Other IT

developments enabled us to present a successful race night as the entertainment for our annual club presentation evening, 'casting' the race clips to the TV. Techno!

As just mentioned we had extra use of the club over the year from West Pennine U3A, with them using the club on three days each week. This is a very positive development. It provides the U3A with the opportunity to offer a wide range of activities to their members, gives us a pleasing return on hire charges and is using the club during the day for the type of things for which it was designed. It also gives an opportunity for the club to be advertised to the U3A members - for example we may pick up a few members from the 'rusty racquets' group, should they wish to play on a more regular basis.

The cricket and tennis teams had positive seasons although no trophies were won. Nick Fowler produced the best bowling performance in Lancashire taking all 10 Darwen wickets for 28 runs. Both sections managed to put out 2 teams each week throughout the season and the investment in youth gives hope for the future. Social Tennis has continued to develop over the year with sessions twice per week.

The club year ended more suddenly than anyone could ever have expected with a national lockdown in response to the Covid19 pandemic. This came right at the end of March, just as we would be advertising for subscriptions for the upcoming year. It was felt that as there was no prospect of play or any club use for the foreseeable future, that we would ask all members to rejoin at £12 i.e. social member rate, to maintain links with members and to provide some income to cover expenses. There was a pleasing response to this from the existing membership. It also produced an unexpected benefit in May, when eased restrictions allowed tennis to be played as a socially distanced sport, and we had an influx of members who were attracted to the outdoor courts (particularly from David Lloyd Club).

The fundamentals of the club remain positive - financially sound, healthy membership, more use of the club, tennis and cricket consolidating, more community involvement. All in all, a pleasing year with good foundations for the future.