



Chair's Report 2020

Thank you

Despite the huge challenges arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic, a huge thank you to the committee who have managed to not only keep the club on an even keel but also to develop many aspects of the club to the benefit of members. Hopefully this report will demonstrate the efforts made by your management committee in running the club during this difficult period.

A Year of Two Halves....

This really has been a year of two halves, the first six months were normal and unaffected by Covid whilst the second half was totally affected by Covid and the resultant fall out.

Pre Covid-19

Winter club sessions were off to a good start at the beginning of **October**. Nick Brewin's Monday morning group continued to increase in popularity, with all courts being in use on a regular basis. Nick has decided to step back from organising Monday's when they return (which they will) so this seems an opportune moment to thank him for his efforts in building up something which was quite embryonic only a short time ago. Margaret Robins continued to run the ever popular Saturday morning sessions successfully, whilst David Stephenson was in charge of the evening sessions which ran well despite some very damp conditions!

David is stepping down from the committee this year having taken the lead on our Safeguarding policies and compliance requirements. We are now very well set up in these areas and it is fair to say that without him we would not be, so thank you David for all your efforts.

October also saw the start of the winter league tennis season with three mixed teams comprising two men and two ladies in each team began playing their matches.

A Beetle Drive was held in the pavilion for the second successive year at the end of **November**, organised once again by Nicki and Holly. This proved a very successful and fun event with both members and non-members of all ages attending.

In **December** we had our annual 'Mulled Wine and Mince pies' do after Saturday morning tennis, with members gathering to celebrate the Christmas season.

January saw a change in the coaching structure with Katie Brooks taking over the reins and bringing a whole new level of enthusiasm and effort to the proceedings! More on this during the report.

In **March** 72 members, family and friends thoroughly enjoyed a fun and challenging (that picture round!) quiz which Paul and Neil masterminded so well. Once again Catherine, with help, produced a tasty chilli supper plus desserts. We had a particularly excellent selection of raffle prizes, with the raffle raising over £200; many thanks to all who contributed a prize. Together with ticket sales, £707 was raised for club funds, an outstanding achievement! The club were allocated 15 pairs of tickets for Wimbledon, during the quiz evening names were drawn but sadly, none of the successful applicants were able to take up their allocation as Wimbledon was cancelled shortly afterwards.

Long standing committee members Jenny Hall and Gini Anderson, who have looked after social events for a number of years, both stood down from the committee during the year. A huge thank you to them and a further thank you to Jenny for doing such a good job in organising both the S&P summer tournaments and the Wimbledon ballots. Both of them will be missed.

Winter league matches finished in March with both the A and B teams being promoted to Division 1 and Division 3. Team Captains were Fraser MacMillan (A), Tina MacMillan (B) and Tom Dymoke (C). Click [Match report 19/20](#) for full details and to read Match Secretary Stuart Malone's report.

Stuart is stepping down from the committee after a three year stint during which he has been Honorary Secretary and Match Secretary. He has made a major contribution to the club; thank you very much Stuart, your input has been invaluable.

And then Covid struck...23rd March saw the implementation of a national lockdown and the closure of club courts, as the country ground to a halt in an attempt to slow the upward trend of Covid cases.

Covid and beyond

At the beginning of **April** there was no certainty as to when we would be able to play tennis again, as a result we decided to suspend membership renewals and a very quiet month followed.

In early **May** the LTA advised that Singles play could commence from the 13th of the month but only if we were able to demonstrate a Covid secure environment. This was the start of a theme that continues to challenge us, the need to read, digest and understand LTA guidance, carry out risk assessments and then ensure we implement the required measures and communicate them to members. The LTA were very clear that clubs were under no obligation to open immediately, indeed they were adamant that there was no obligation to open at all unless the management were confident that their guidelines could be met.

Following frantic efforts from committee members we achieved our goal, to open on the first day play was allowed in what we considered to be a safe environment. This led to us being featured on ITV's regional news programme and in the Sunday Times!

One of the stipulations in relation to re-opening was managing court occupancy, which we could see required a whole different approach to our existing arrangements and was a major hurdle given the timescale. Within a few days Nicki had researched and investigated the Clubspark booking system, which we have access to through our LTA membership, and by the time lockdown was lifted we had a fully functioning online booking system up and running. The first few weeks saw many minor glitches sorted out and by the middle of June the system was running smoothly. This has continued to prove very popular with members who have made great use of the system since introduction with hundreds of court bookings every month, a total of 2,111 to date! 127 members are registered with ClubSpark and able to book courts.

We also spent considerable time considering the best approach to compensate members for the enforced shutdown and as a committee endorsed a proposal to extend the season by three months to 30th June 2021, so that members have 15 months membership for the price of 12 months ie membership fees are effectively reduced by 25%. In implementing this, we were well aware there might be further lockdowns, hence we allowed an extra 3 months within the membership year which was much longer than the shutdown period, just in case.

Whilst only singles play was allowed, Katie was able to restart coaching and found adult members queuing up to have lessons! Just over 40 adults have received individual lessons from Katie since May and many of them continue to have a weekly or fortnightly lessons with her.

On the last day of May the LTA updated their guidelines and yes we had to go through the rigmarole again; read, digest and understand and then implement changes in a safe and secure manner. Doubles play was now allowed with 4 people from different households.

We were fortunate in being eligible for a Covid grant from South Norfolk District Council which enabled us to bring forward our plans to replace the bottom court lamps with LED's which was part of our future planning. These lights installed in **June** are more reliable, last longer, cost much less to run and have greatly reduced light spillage. The new lights have been greatly appreciated by members who have given very positive feedback.

July saw yet more revisions to guidance, particularly in relation to track and trace which meant we had to make the inclusion of participants a mandatory requirement on our booking system. Considerable time and effort has been involved with this development and continues as we have an obligation to monitor bookings.

In **August** repainting of the bottom courts was carried out; this is required every five to six years to ensure the court surface remains in good order and does not wear prematurely. A very good finish has been achieved which should last us well.

Coach Katie organised 14 Mini Tennis sessions during the Summer holiday and over 50 children attended these sessions. The club's new autumn coaching programme was launched to begin in September, with Mini Tots courses right through to Junior 18 and under groups.

The finals of the S&P Summer Tournament took place in **September**. Smith & Pinching continue to sponsor our tournament which is hugely appreciated as it enables us to provide first rate prizes to both winners and runners up. We had 33 pairs enter the Ladies, Mixed and Men's Doubles. 11 men entered the Singles and 8 men entered the Over 60's. Considering lockdown interrupted the tournament launch, this was a good response in a year when it could easily have been cancelled. A total of 55 matches were played.

Well done to Alison and Hugh Gilmour who, in their first year in charge, had the added complications arising out of the Covid 19 lockdown to contend with. They opted for different formats depending on the number of entrants and a Covid secure finals day was enjoyed by all.

Smith & Pinching Summer Tournament Roll of Honour 2020		
Event	Winner(s)	Runner(s)Up
Men's Open Singles	Ollie Palmer	Paul Henery
Ladies' Doubles	Anna Linton/Verena Rowan	Mandy Bailey/Lea Denley
Mixed Doubles	Elissa Wood/Ollie Palmer	Mandy Bailey/Nathan Dickinson
Mixed Doubles Plate	Sue Jupe/Lloyd Davies	Christine Mounsey/Mike Hansell

Men's Doubles	Ollie Palmer/Chris Lambert	Fraser MacMillan/Alex Goodall
Men's Doubles Plate	Rob Atkinson/Richard Smith	Malcolm Clarke/David Lumb
Over 60's Doubles	Chris Mitchell/Mike Hansell	Hugh Gilmour/Malcolm Clarke

We are delighted to see membership numbers back over 200 with 156 adults and 55 juniors. This has resulted in fees of £13,063 year to date which compares with £11,817 income at the same time last year, when we had 152 adults and 36 junior members. It is particularly pleasing to see an increase in Family Memberships from 11 last year to 27. Ann is stepping down as Membership Secretary after the AGM; a big thank you to Ann for your efforts in this vital role.

The increase in junior memberships is largely a result of Katie's enthusiastic and dedicated approach. Junior memberships which were down to 23 at their low point, have increased to 56 this year. Furthermore, there were only 18 children on the coaching programme in January 2020; we now have 95 children attending coaching at the club entirely due to Katie's efforts. An Inclusive programme is growing, with Katie coaching 5 children individually who have learning difficulties and ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder).

The Adults Improvers course has continued, albeit with a smaller group to meet requirements and Anna Linton's popular Friday Ladies Mornings resumed in October. An Adults daytime Improvers course and a Beginners course are now planned to start in December, when Ladies Mornings should also recommence, assuming lockdown 2 has been relaxed.

Box Leagues were introduced for the winter to allow doubles play against other members that meet requirements and are being run by Alison and Hugh. There are five boxes of men's and three boxes of ladies up and running and hopefully these will recommence very soon. The committee decided to assist members for this winter only by making floodlights free; this has proved a very popular measure with good levels of evening play. Winter league matches have started and we expect they will recommence once lockdown 2 has finished.

So that brings me to the end of what has been a quite extraordinary year in which, despite Covid, we have managed to implement some really positive initiatives. These include continued updating of our safeguarding policies, an online booking system, an enormous increase in coaching activity, box leagues for the winter, new LED floodlights and repainting of the bottom courts. It has been great to see so much daytime play on the courts this year which we hope will continue in the future.

Finally, we look forward to a return to normality next year when we can once again enjoy our social tennis sessions, Serve Offs, Sunday tournaments and summer league matches - hopefully without interruption!

Chris Mitchell - Chair

Committee

Chair Chris Mitchell, Hon Secretary Stuart Malone, Hon Treasurer Rob Hall, Mandy Bailey, Jenny Chambers, Nathan Dickinson, Jane Hendriks, Fraser MacMillan, Nicki Mitchell, Ann Starky and David Stephenson.