



Minutes of Tennis Annual Meeting held on Monday 9th October 2017

Present:

David Burditt	(Chairman)
Nicola Dearman	
Catherine Michie	
Alex Hince	
Andrew Wakely	
Peter Dunning	
Vanessa Walker	(Ladies Captain)
Tim Webb	(Men's Captain)
Pippa Walker	(Liaison Director)
Marc Newey	(Chief Executive)
Danny Sitton	(Tennis Director)
Peter Bradburn	(Course & Grounds Manager)
Paul Lindsay	(Racquets Manager)

Plus 17 members.

1. Apologies:

Alan Flitcroft and Daren Boner.

2. Welcome by David Burditt (Chairman)

Introductions were made by the Chairman. He welcomed Andrew Wakely and Peter Dunning to the Committee and thanked Vanessa Walker for her sterling efforts as Ladies Captain over the last period. She will be replaced by Catherine Michie and he wished Catherine the best of luck during her tenure.

3. Bubble Replacement Project:

Jon Grantham (JG), Planning Consultant and Director for LUC.

JG; Those in attendance were shown a power point presentation, previously made to the Board, giving an overview of the proposed Steel Structure to replace the current Bubble which has come to the end of its lifespan.

JG explained the constraint regarding planning at Roehampton Club for the replacement Bubble. These include the Club being situated on Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and the importance of positive community projects such as Rackets Cubed to assist with planning permission.

Some of the proposed infrastructure for the bubble replacement will include the courts being as close to LTA recommendations for court dimensions / heights as practical in space available, Welfare facilities – toilets / shoe changing and a Premier playing surface all within tolerance (level).

JG explained how, even though there is only a small increase in footprint the application will be designated a major planning application and go to the Wandsworth Planning Authority and the Mayor's office because of the size of the building. JG then showed some images representing how the new structure would look and the minimal change to the scenery and layout to the Club.

Marc Newey (MN) informed the meeting that the Board has approved the submission of the planning application but as will be explained later the Board has not given final financing approval for the project at this stage.

Questions (Q):

Bill Murie (BM): Who is the statutory Consultation aimed at?

JG; This is once planning application has been verified and accepted as valid by the Council, notices go up in the local area, usually on lamp posts and a letter of notification sent to local residents.

Answer (A):

MN: There will always be opposition to any development the Club proposes by Woking Close residents and CARPA (a local group opposed to Roslyn Park advertising boards).

Tim Freeman (TF), Projects Director for Trevor May Contractors Limited.

TF explained the type of frame and structure proposed, to fit best within planning, financial criteria and space available. Also there are major benefits of having a steel structure compared to the current pressurised Bubble including frost protection /

mechanical ventilation / openable areas / daylight, LED down lighting with a switching method to minimise unnecessary energy use. There still needs agreement for the cost and the requirements for some features e.g. a cushioned layer between the cushioned acrylic surface and tarmac.

Questions:

Harry Alvarez (HA): What is the maximum energy use now compared to the proposed development with LED lighting and the structure not being pressurised?

TF: We cannot give an exact figure but estimated calculations for savings have been done showing it will be lower.

DB: It is estimated the savings will mean the cost to run the new structure would be in the region of a quarter of its current cost.

MN: Using the current bills and taking a lifespan of 30 years for the structure it is estimated to save £650k over 30 years by changing to the steel structure with LED lighting.

HA: The sub-total of the projects cost seemed to miss out the excluded items, please explain.

TF: The excluded items are costs that must be paid, fees, application costs so is not part of the figure presented but is part of the overall cost.

DB: Whilst the cost is not small the investment over 30 to 40 years and replacing a current structure and floor surface, past its sell by date, is a good investment. DB explained the history regarding the proposed development and research and due-diligence made into the replacement Bubble project.

Bruce Walker: Great to see the Tennis Committee and Board being forward thinking.

Vanessa Walker: Is this structure able to lift the sides for access and air flow?

TF: No, as this option, whilst possible, actually creates weakness in the overall project. The air handling unit will help with airflow, temperatures but it is not air-conditioning.

BM & Richard Williams: How does this fit in to the Club's long-term plan and previously mentioned 20 year plan?

MN: outlined the current strategic thinking as well as some of the Club's previous history regarding planning application failure, so the Board felt this was the best development currently for the Club and Tennis section.

TF and JG were thanked and left the meeting.

4. Season review by David Burditt (Chairman)

In a total Club Membership of 5,226 (5155 last year) at Roehampton, we now have 4201 (4052) eligible to play tennis, of which some 1192 (1151) are Juniors under the age of 18. This represents a slight increase in junior members from last year and an increase in tennis eligible, adult members of around 100. Within these figures we were able to welcome 314 new members to the section.

There have been no major changes to or refurbishment of court surfaces this year other than the standard maintenance regimes that ensure our courts are kept in

prime condition. We should thank Peter Bradburn and his team for their work across all courts but particularly in opening the grass courts a week in advance of the schedule and keeping one block of courts open 2 weeks longer than originally scheduled.

The Tennis Committee have been mainly focussed on moving the Replacement Bubble Project forward through its various phases particularly following the realisation that the Wandsworth Planning Authority might be open to the suggestion of a slightly enlarged and better facility than we currently have available. We have investigated various structures, different lighting regimes and verified our court surface selection by visiting sites around the South East and having lengthy discussions with our Project Manager, Tim Freeman.

We have also worked to bring in initiatives that are aimed at making best use of our facilities in normally 'quiet' times and to relieve pressure on court space. This has been achieved by better scheduling, introducing off-peak leagues and continuing the move towards group coaching at peak times.

The tennis section continues to thrive. In particular:

- Our tennis teams maintain high levels of achievement across all ages and genders.
- Our internal singles league shows regular participation of circa 200 members.
- Our men's doubles leagues continue to support circa 20 pairs, the ladies doubles leagues have 36 pairs the majority of which play in off peak times, defined as Monday-Friday before 4:30pm. The new off peak singles league, now in its 3rd iteration is attracting 33 players and the mixed doubles leagues currently have 16 pairs, slightly down from last year.
- Organised social tennis continues to attract good numbers and all 3 sessions usually attract 12-20 players each.

The demand for coaching shows no sign of diminishing. By promoting group sessions we have managed to enable additional members' access to coaches but there is still great demand for more, particularly at weekends. We have continued with our policy of ensuring that coaching occupies no more than 50% of courts.

Our electronic booking system continues to operate with great reliability and utilising additional features, such as the League and Tournament Management functionality, has simplified the operation of Leagues and enabled us to offer a wider choice of Leagues without requiring too much additional administrative effort.

Our outreach programmes are highly successful and have in no small way been advantageous to us in our discussions with the Planning Department. We accepted a request from a new charity, Rackets Cubed, to start a trial on Friday afternoons where children from less advantaged schools come to the Club and spend time doing some tennis, some mathematics and having sandwiches which seem to go down particularly well! In conjunction with Rackets Cubed we organised a Club

Social Event for Members comprising tennis followed by dinner at the Club. We were pleased to welcome Justine Greening and Tim Henman, who not only played some tennis with us but also gave some very amusing anecdotes during the evening's dinner.

The year ahead

Court Pressures

The measures we have taken to help alleviate court pressures seem to be having the desired effect. Although there are still pinch points at various times of the week and at specific times of the year the issues we saw in the previous year have been much less. We will continue to monitor the situation and take appropriate action as required.

Flood Lighting Replacement

The success of the LED lighting on the Artificial Clay Courts has left us in no doubt that the LED systems currently available are now a mature technology and offer us the opportunity to not only improve the consistency and luminance of the light on court but also save money on operating costs. As a result there is a programme in place to replace all our floodlights with LED lights over the course of time. This programme is due to start during the next period.

Ball Machine

The original ball machine was utilised so much that the motor burned out. We decided to replace this machine with a machine that provided additional functionality, including drill patterns, remote control, mobility as a result of battery operation etc. Unfortunately it seems that the complexity of the new machine was a little too much for some members and having replaced the motor on the old machine; it was used much more often. We have retained the new machine and are considering how we might use it, possibly in the Airhall when it is deployed in the next week or so.

That concludes my brief summary of the previous year's activities and our aims for the coming year. Before introducing the next speaker I would like to thank my co-committee members, the team captains, the management team, staff and coaches for their commitment and effort over the past year.

Members present thank DB for his informative report.

5. Court Surfaces Update by Peter Bradburn (PB)

Grass Courts

Overall the grass court season was a huge success with the courts opened on and ahead of schedule at the end of April as well as ahead of similar local Clubs with Grass courts.

It has been a year of two halves, a dry spring aiding the progress of grass growth and providing a firm surface for play. August and September have seen more rain

than Jan, Feb and March this year and this halted works on the grass renovations.

Grass Courts 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 & 24 have now have their major renovation works complete and already received the first cutting of the new grass this October in anticipation of being on schedule for a May 2018 opening.

Grass Courts 25, 26 27 & 28

The courts stayed open later in the season and received praise throughout the season for their playability.

The autumn works and over-seeding using the new germination sheets are slightly behind scheduled due to the wet August and September months. The signs are encouraging for a full 2018 grass court season.

PB provided an image of the courts condition at the end of the season and highlighted the excellent work done by Chris Hughes and his team.

Bubble Courts

PB reiterated the timely replacement proposal project for the Bubble as the current Bubble has seen issues with inflation and plant malfunctions this year.

PB and his team were thanked.

6. Tennis Director Report – Danny Sitton

From the Teams perspective it has been another positive year at the Club. We have had another very busy year with heavy court usage and lots of varied tennis activity. There has been a progressive shift of momentum towards more social cohesion within the section and we will continue to work on improving this.

This time last year, we were at a point where tennis activity had become a little too busy at certain peak times, which led to court-pressure problems. This summer, we've made some changes which have helped alleviate this to a degree.

The tweaks were:

- Only scheduling one home Surrey league match at any time.
- Ladies London League matches scheduled from 11.30am instead of 11am
- Junior Aegon matches scheduled after 4pm on weekends.
- A reduction in 'friendly' inter-club matches.
- Club Champs ran from mid-May until Finals Day as opposed to early April. During this time the singles league was put on hold and two new events for Singles League players will be run as part of Club Champs.
- During midweek times, the Airhall was used for adult group coaching whilst the Bubble will be used for general Member bookings
- The number of courts used for coaching has also been reduced during some weekend and weekday evening periods.

Overall, these tweaks have had the desired effect and will remain in place without

any further significant changes next year.

Colour Coded Player Standard Guide:

This provides a basis for player standardization so Members have an idea of what playing standard to expect at various Tennis Activities. Self-assessment at this stage with advice from coach if needed – a less judgmental process.

Have been rolling this out to all new Tennis Members via the new Tennis Induction programme and is a useful tool – will remain unchanged.

New Members:

New Members are being more successfully integrated into the tennis section now. The inductions work well and DS will continue to schedule two induction periods during 'intakes'.

Social Tennis:

Seven weekly Social Tennis Sessions - free of charge. Attendances have been very healthy this year. The previously fortnightly Vets matchplay is now a weekly session that continues all year round.

Parent/Infant session each Wed morning in the summer.

20's/30's social's have been a bit of a struggle – DS has tried a few different events but with not much success so far. Will be running a Christmas tournament at end of Nov.

There are still a variety of other 'one-off' events such as Rusty Racquets sessions (Spring), Vets Tournaments, Parent/Child tournaments and other events are also run which will continue – there are already a number booked in for next year.

Pay and Play's:

DS reduced the number of 'pay and plays' – partly to fit in with seasonal demand and also to reduce court-use but they play an important role in providing an important pathway for Members into other forms of tennis and interaction. We now have four sessions during the week and new a session on Saturday mornings which is taken by Stan.

Tennis Team:

Very strong – Paul Lindsay continues to do a fantastic job with court booking, MyCourts and other responsibilities. The Junior programme still going really well under Nik Snapes' care and he's doing many new things to expand the offer. DS continues to have an experienced and settled team of coaches perfect for the range of needs at the Club. DS has also reduced the number of hours of some of the coaches in order to create more court space for Member bookings.

Junior Coaching:

We continue to have around 400 bookings on the coaching programme which has been the case for the last four summers now. This number is unlikely to increase much as we have reached 'saturation point' in the sense that we are using as much court space as permitted.

The match-play programme remains strong and gives the juniors great match

experience and a huge hand getting used to the LTA rating structure – results are fed into LTA to give juniors a good platform for external competition. We have hosted around 10 junior LTA events in the last year. A bigger 3-day Grade 4 tournament at Christmas and a number of grade 5 one-day events. This was in the hope that our own Members would get a taste of LTA tournaments. Our main success with this has been with the lower age-groups, so we will mainly continue with the youngsters age-groups going forwards.

Junior Tennis Evening – Friday evenings Apr-Oct.
Two big social events per year – Junior Club Champs and Christmas Bash.

Ball Machine:

Very popular indeed – used multiple times per day. We now have two machines as we purchased a ‘top-of-the-range’ machine intending to replace the current machine with this one.

At present, we only have one of these in action. The new machine has regularly been broken and the old machine has come to the rescue on a number of occasions. At present, it seems the old machine which is sturdier but more limited is more able to cope with the volume of use needed. We have explored possibility of employing a second court with the ball machine, but this is not straight forward due to safety. We may simply store both machines on Court 11 and Members can choose which machine they prefer.

Competitive Opportunities

Summer teams performed very well – the Aegon teams were a particular highlight with the Men’s 1st team missing out on a place in the final of the National Finals on a ‘tie-break’ shootout for the second year running – we hope to go a stage further next year! The Men’s 3rd team were promoted for a second consecutive year. The Vets team are very strong and the Over 65’s Interclub won the National Title which is excellent and enjoyed competing in the European Finals this Autumn. I’m very grateful to all the team captains for the vital work they do. Tim and Vanessa did an excellent job this year and I’m particularly grateful to Vanessa for her tireless energy with the Ladies’ section – special thank you to Jan Menneken, Ed Jones and Filip Meijer as hand responsibility for leading their teams to others. Rachel Partington and Natasha Marks also deserve a mention for very hard work this year with the Ladies’ teams which hasn’t been easy.

Singles League has accommodated well over 200 players this year.

We now have Men’s Doubles, Ladies Double’s and Mixed doubles league, Off-peak Singles and off-peak ladies’ doubles league.

We now have around 50 teams in various inter-club leagues in operation which led to approx. 300 matches per year. This has included two more teams in the ‘midweek’ Surrey leagues.

We have reduced the number of inter-club friendlies but the Vets Quad Cup and Triangular’s have been as popular as ever.

Again, Danny Gesua deserves a special mention for his amazing commitment to the Vets teams which is very time-consuming. I appreciate these efforts – tennis clubs cannot function well without Members willing to serve in this way.

Communication:

Continuing with Recorder updates

Racquets Round Up has made dramatic difference

Better use of noticeboards with much clearer promotional material

Still needs lots more work to do and the Club is working on using Smart phone technology which is a time-consuming process, but this will make a huge difference.

Summary

David Burditt steps down from position as Tennis Chairman. DS thanked DB for his support since his arrival at the Club. DB has shown tireless eye for detail and always remained very approachable and logical. DB was instrumental in the introduction of electronic court bookings and has been a very safe pair of hands for the tennis section with everything he has done. DS thanked David who remains on the Committee; this is important through the crucial period of Bubble replacement. DS very happy at the Club - Marc, the Board and the Tennis Committee have been totally supportive in everything DS attempted to do and very grateful for this.

Questions:

Q.

HA – New Members are coming to social tennis but lots seem to not be aware of the offer, still seems to be a problem with communication.

A.

DS – Explained how All new Members are informed of all offers within the Tennis section and have an on court induction with DS, which he runs twice a year. Those unable to attend are sent a pack regarding all Tennis information and offers which includes social tennis.

Q.

David Moss (DM) - Will you shorten the downtime of the leagues during the Club Championship?

A.

DS – Will amend the 2018 schedule slightly and produce the Club Championship draws earlier so members can plan their matches in advance as well as their league matches.

Q.

DM – Do you have stats on the Grass court usage?

A.

DS – Yes we have stats, for instance only 71 days of some form of play was possible in 2016 on the grass courts. The demand is there for the courts but the Tennis Committee needs to consider the best use of the courts in the longterm.

DB – The cost to maintain the courts is the highest of any surface and the surface used the least whilst the courts are under pressure for use at Peak times. This needs consideration.

HA – We always have this discussion and other courts have down time.

MN – How the Club uses all its courts is the main consideration. As raised previously, the pressure on courts and coaching is at a high and from 18 all year round courts to only have 5 for coaching at off peak times, when coaching is in high demand, is a topic for the Tennis Committee to consider.

Andrew Guest – Get access to courts outside the Club for Member use instead of thinking about taking the grass up.

HA – What about Rosslyn Park if you are thinking long term.

MN – These options do not solve the issue of usage and pressure of demand at the current time. A member going to play at a site such as Dover House Road is not really a consideration.

At the end of his presentation, DS received a loud round of applause from the members present.

7. AOB & Member Questions

A question submitted in writing had been covered in previous conversations. MN read out the request from Donna Kirby.

“I don’t think I’m alone in having to join a second club in order to get my children individual tennis lessons. In fact Rebecca also has a weekly group lesson at the weekend at All Star Tennis at Tooting Common. I know you’ll be facing the same old arguments about Roehampton being a tennis club, not a coaching academy, but it does seem that particularly at weekends there is a desperate shortage of coaching for the children. Also worth noting is that her individual lesson at Spencer costs me £28 per hour. BARGAIN! I’m actually perfectly happy with this state of affairs; it’s much easier for me to get to Spencer than it is to get to Roehampton and of course it’s much cheaper. But it can’t be good for Roehampton for this scenario to be repeated among other members - people are eventually going to get fed up. I think maybe the current membership and incoming members want more than just a place to play tennis, they really want the opportunity to improve through coaching, both on an individual and group basis. But I could be wrong about that - maybe we could put together a survey to ask the tennis members what their priorities are.

Will you table the proposal to convert some of the grass courts to a year-round surface? I’m guessing they were hardly used this season again, and meanwhile you’re prevented from offering more courts to coaches while the grass courts lie unused for most of the year.”

It was agreed previous conversations covered the points raised.

Committee Election:

DB – The Committee elections saw by rotation Catherine Michie and Nicola Dearman should retire or stand for re-election.

CM has stood down from the Committee and will be the new Lady Tennis Captain and ND has been re-elected.

Andrew Wakely and Peter Dunning have been elected to the Tennis Committee and

will join from the next Tennis Committee meeting.

DB has served a 4 year term as Chair and will retire from the Tennis Committee after the meeting. DB will stay on the Tennis Committee as a non-voting, advisory member to provide continuity to the Bubble development project in 2018.

All thanked DB for his commitment as Chair.

MN presented DB with a gift from the Club to say thank you for his four years as Tennis Chairman

Meeting concluded at 9.16pm and DB thanked all present.