



## **Minutes of Tennis Annual Meeting held on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

### **Present:**

Alex Hince	(Chairman)
Nicola Dearman	
Andrew Wakely	
Puk Kroijer	
Victoria Stephens	
Tim Webb	(Men's Captain)
Marc Newey	(Chief Executive)
Danny Sitton	(Tennis Director)
Peter Bradburn	(Course & Grounds Manager)
Paul Lindsay	(Racquets Manager)

### **In Attendance**

Jan Menneken

Plus 21 members.

### **1. Apologies:**

Catherine Michie, David Burditt & Alan Flitcroft

### **2. Welcome by Alex Hince (Chairman)**

Introductions were made by the Chairman. AH welcomed Puk Kroijer and Victoria Stephens to the Committee and thanked Tim Webb for his sterling efforts as Men's Captain over the last period. TW retired by rotation and will be replaced by Jan Menneken and AH wished Jan all the best during his tenure.

### **3. Court Surfaces Update by Peter Bradburn (PB)**

#### **Grass Courts**

Overall the grass court season was a huge success with the courts opened on schedule.

The warm and dry spring/summer months proved challenging with grass growth but previous works with the installation of the borehole have helped to future proof the Club and are paying dividends in terms of accessible water for maintenance.

**Grass Courts 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 & 24** The courts stayed open later in the season and received praise throughout the season for their playability.

#### **Grass Courts 25, 26 27 & 28**

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 2019 opening.

Members congratulated PB for the excellent work done by Chris Hughes and his team.

**Question:** Can we counter the new ITC shade that will impact courts 19-21 with artificial sunlight?

**Answer:** MN – Potentially yes, we are currently investigating an option to purchase a light rig for the same issue of shading on the 4<sup>th</sup> golf green. We could use the same machine when not in use on courts 19-21 if needed.

Harry Alvarez read out some figures relating to the Member Survey and stated his support of keeping all ten of the grass courts, in relation to the Club's Masterplan. MN explained to Members the process and options to be considered going forward. The Section Committee views will be put forward to the Board to then consult with the Committees and then the Membership for the Board to then look at the best options for the Club in January. A final masterplan will be sent to the council in February 2019.

Danny Gesua highlighted the current perception among some parts of the Tennis membership that the Club wants to reduce Grass courts and the proposed options to date are biased towards this.

MN explained these were initial plans from the development consultants based on Member feedback and also in line with results from the Membership survey. The

MN/  
PB

option of maintaining the status quo is possible, but the demand of the membership to use more courts far outweighs supply.

DG raised that if Rosslyn Park was to be bought out of its lease in the future then the strategic decision would be clearer.

MN highlighted the Rosslyn Park lease runs to 2056 and the demand on Tennis surfaces is current but the Board is considering all options.

Bill Murie – Can the process of the Masterplan be made more open – possibly in the Recorder so members are more aware?

MN agreed to publicise the timescale to members.

AH reiterated the Tennis Committee has heard the wish from the members present for the Club to retain its Grass Courts.

MN

#### **4. Bubble Replacement Project:**

AH welcomed Gareth Belsham from Project Managers Naismiths and Tim Freeman from Trevor May who gave an update on progress with the new Indoor Tennis Centre.

#### **Gareth Belsham from Project Managers Naismiths.**

**GB** Gave an update on the new Indoor Tennis Centre (ITC)

Project started late but now currently completion date is 30 November and all works are on schedule for this. The Project is running slightly under budget with good progress, all steel works are complete.

Roger Perry – There is no mention of Heating in the project?

GB – explained with increase in building regulations and planning (BREEAM) heating is not possible but the building does have frost prevention heating.

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

TF gave an update on the type of surface and lighting for the new ITC. The new LED lighting is the latest in the evolution of the installer's product so will be a showcase for them and benefit to the development.

Playing surface as agreed with the committee and Board is a non-porous cushioned acrylic of medium pace.

Harry Alvarez – Are there any concerns with water runoff from the golf course?

TF – Not really. The new concrete ring beam is higher than the surround and all works on the golf course previously done should prevent this concern.

Richard Ramsey – Who is looking after the quality of construction?

GB – Naismiths are and all is covered in the contract.

AH reiterated to reduce confusion over Airhall/Bubble the new structure will be called the Indoor Tennis Centre (ITC).

**Question:** Is there a block on Tennis Membership?

**MN** – No but there is a waiting list to get into the Club through to January 2020. The

existing membership usage is higher than ever before due to its wonderful facilities and coaching. The Membership make-up will need to be looked at and the option of reducing the number of members is to be considered. The Board recognises that we must be able to accommodate existing Member wishes and demands as a priority above prospective Members.

## **5. Season review by Alex Hince (Chairman)**

AH thanked Gareth and Tim.

**TF and GB were thanked and left the meeting.**

AH – It is pretty exciting that since the last Tennis Annual Meeting we have gone from the early stages of project planning to very near completion and we are grateful for members' patience - and the favourable weather to date.

It has been a busy year on court as well.

In a total Club Membership of just over 5000, tennis eligible members remain constant at around 4,000, 1,800 of whom play regularly with some 350 now involved in the internal leagues and about 150 representing the club in external matches.

AH particularly liked to thank the Ladies' Captain, Catherine Michie and the outgoing Men's captain Tim Web for their sterling efforts and commitment.

Aside from the bubble redevelopment there have been no major changes to or refurbishment of court surfaces this year other than the standard maintenance regime. Peter and his team have done a superb job in keeping all courts in supreme condition but particularly in maintaining the grass courts at the highest standard through an exceptionally dry summer. Thank you.

At the end of June we hosted the inaugural GANT championships showcasing some of the world's top players and top class Juniors and of course our pristine grass courts. Discussions are close to finalisation for a further two-year agreement which is great news. Club members benefitted from reduced ticket prices and some 30 juniors had the opportunity to ballboy. It was exciting to watch the world's No 1 Junior Jason Tseng, who went on to win Junior Wimbledon and our very own Joe Salisbury, who reached the Wimbledon Men's Doubles semi-finals. The Committee was very pleased to award Joe a Sports Bursary this year to help him in his quest to reach the heights in world tennis.

The tennis section continues to thrive, thanks in large part to the efforts of Danny and his team, who have continued to strive for a balance between social tennis, coaching and competition. The initiatives introduced to alleviate pressure on courts at peak times have shown significant improvement. This has been achieved by better scheduling of matches at weekends, increasing participation in off-peak leagues and continuing the move towards group coaching at peak times.

Communication has been regular and informative via the Racquets Director's Diary, the Racquets Round Up flyer and moving forward, we hope to improve this further by more effective use of the website and social media. Danny is just getting to grips with Instagram!

Our outreach programme through the Rackets Cubed charity is proving highly successful offering an integrated programme of tennis, maths tuition and a nutritious meal to 30 local children each Friday afternoon during term time. The extremely wet conditions at last month's fundraising event did little to dampen Members' enthusiasm during an afternoon of tennis with Tim Henman and a superb dinner. The Tennis and Squash Committees have adopted Rackets Cubed as their 'official' charity and we are exploring ways to develop the partnership with more events involving Club members.

Finally, we look forward to working with the Board in developing a strategic masterplan that meets the needs of our tennis members. At the moment the committee is happy with the range of court surfaces and playing speeds but would welcome plans to increase the number of courts available to members in the future. Member demand is currently outweighing supply of courts at peak times as we all, I am sure, have experienced.

The TC notes that there continues to be pressure on court availability at peak times - weekend mornings and early evenings - as well as a tension in the demand for courts between coaching sessions, free play, social sessions, league and team matches.

#### FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The TC would therefore welcome and encourage any plans to increase the number of courts available to members, for example by adding two new smash courts behind the clubhouse as shown in conceptual design 2.

While the TC likes the current range of surfaces, if new courts are added, it would strongly recommend smash rather than synthetic grass for maximum year-round usage.

If the Council is open to the addition of a 2nd ITC which could be used all year round, adjacent to the new ITC (conceptual plans 2 & 3), the TC would be willing to consider sacrificing up to 3 of the grass courts. However, this would not be acceptable to the TC if the airhall over blue courts 12-14 is lost, removing three of the 'indoor' courts.

The TC does not want to sacrifice any grass courts for another outdoor surface. The TC strongly objects to the prospect of playing tennis on a MUGA, partly because of the distraction of other painted lines across the tennis courts and partly due to concern that the surfaces would be used for other sports, thus taking away tennis court availability.

**QUESTIONS:**

**Harry Alvarez** – What is GST of America usage on grass courts plan for 2019?

**MN** – GST – Grand Slam Tennis and Tennis Ventures are two external event companies that hire our grass courts in the summer around Wimbledon bringing the Club a large court rental/food and beverage income. The impact is minimal with 1 hour 30 minutes on one weekend afternoon and the other using two quiet periods on two/three days totalling 5 to 6 hours use on grass. These are purposely programmed at quiet times with minimal impact to members.

**6. Tennis Director Report – Danny Sitton**

It has been another positive year at the Club. We've had another very busy year with heavy court usage and lots of varied tennis activity.

This time last year, we made some changes to court usage which helped alleviate some of the extreme court pressure issues we were facing at the time:

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 were run as part of Club Champs.
- During midweek times, the Airhall was used for adult group coaching whilst the Bubble was 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 although the court pressure issue is heightened at present by the Bubble replacement work going on at present. This will be more manageable when the new ITC opens.

**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.
- 20's/30's socials have fared better this year. DS has run more events and including a curry to the evening seems to be having the desired effect!
- There are still a variety of other 'one-off' events such as Rusty Racquets sessions (Spring), Vets Tournaments, Parent/Child tournaments and other events which will continue.

**Pay and Plays:**

- DS reduced the number of 'pay and plays' – partly to reduce court-use but they play an important role in providing a pathway for Members into other forms of tennis and interaction. We now have three sessions during the week and a session on Saturday mornings which is popular.

### **Tennis Team**

- There are no changes to the employed team. Paul Lindsay continues to do a fantastic job managing the court bookings and other responsibilities. The Junior programme is still operating really well under Nik Snapes's 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 reduced the number of hours of some of the coaches in order to create more court space for Member bookings. James Higgs left at the end of the summer and he has been replaced by Sebastiano Comotti who has started well.

### **Junior Coaching:**

- We continue to have a healthy number of bookings on the coaching programme which has been the case for the last four years 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 program remains strong and provides the juniors great match experience and acts as a 'spring board' for the LTA rating structure and the competitive world of tennis – results are fed into LTA to give juniors a good platform for external competition.
- Last year we hosted around 10 junior LTA events – we have stopped these in an effort to alleviate court pressure. However, we are now running an additional 8 winter junior teams instead which require far less court space, but still provide competitive team tennis.
- The Junior Tennis Evening has been more popular this summer and the introduction of food appears to have helped significantly.
- Two big social events per year – Junior Club Champs for singles tournaments and the Christmas Bash for doubles tournaments. We are trialing this but hope to repeat next year.

### **Club Champs**

- Historically, we have run two Club Champs days approx. one week apart – Junior Club Champs followed by Adult Club Champs on the middle Sunday of Wimbledon. In 2019 we will experiment with one combined Finals Day on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> June. It is hoped this will make Club Champs a real showcase event with more spectator interest. It will help reduce the impact on court pressure and free up the grass courts much earlier. The added bonus is that we can use the Gant stands for Adult Open Finals.

### **Competitive Opportunities**

- Summer teams performed very well – the Aegon teams were a particular highlight with the Men's 1<sup>st</sup> team missing out on a place in the final of the National Finals after being beaten in the SF for the third year running. This

year, our problem was that the team was so strong that three of our players were at the US Open during the finals. This clash should be avoided next year.

- The Aegon Ladies' 1<sup>st</sup> team were promoted to the Regional division under Lily Brown's stewardship and will look to join the men in the National Division for 2020.
- The other Aegon teams maintained their position.
- Surrey teams have all had a steady summer:
  - It's been difficult to recruit for 1<sup>st</sup> teams with pressure from the Aegon schedule, hence they were relegated. Men's 2<sup>nd</sup> promoted to division 5, Men's 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> remain in their divisions, 7 and 15 respectively.
  - Ladies had a great summer. Ladies' 1<sup>st</sup> team promoted to division one, Ladies' 2<sup>nd</sup> team promoted to division 5, Ladies' 3<sup>rd</sup> team promoted to division 6
  - Midweek teams also had a great summer. All four teams promoted to divisions 1, 5, 6 and 9 respectively.
- DS very grateful to all the team captains for the vital work they do. very hard work this year with the Ladies' teams which hasn't been easy.
- Singles League has accommodated well over 230 players this year.
- We now have Men's Doubles, Ladies Doubles and Mixed Doubles leagues, Off-peak Singles – all of which have expanded. As a result, over 350 Members have taken part in league tennis.
- We have around 50 teams in various inter-club leagues in operation which led to over 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 Triangulars have remained as popular as ever.
- Again, Danny Gesua deserves a special mention for his amazing commitment to the Vets teams which is very time-consuming. DS appreciates 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
- We are now seriously delving into social media possibilities with Instagram being the most suitable for our purposes. This includes video footage of coaching tips and tennis highlights – please sign up!

#### **Summary**

- Alex Hince has done a fantastic job as Tennis Chair along with the rest of the Tennis Committee. My sincere thanks to them all. They volunteer their time selflessly and it's very clear to me they only have the good of the Club in mind – I'm very grateful for their guidance and expertise.
- Personally, DS is very happy at the Club – DS has been at the Club for nearly 5 years and is very proud to be associated with such a prestigious Club.



Marc, the Board and the Tennis Committee have been totally supportive in everything he has attempted to do and DS is very grateful for this.

## 7. AOB & Member Questions

**Andrew Guest (AG)** – Could the Synthetic Grass tennis courts be blinded off as golfers and children put players off walking and running past?  
DS & PB will look to action this.

DS/  
PB

**AG** – The divider net on courts 7-10 should only be on 9 & 10. TC agreed to look at moving or removing completely from this area.

TC

**Danny Gesua** – Can the divider net between 5 & 6 be weighed down?

**DS** – There is a health and safety issue with this but will look at what could be done.

**Roger Perry** – Court attire. What can be done to stop players looking so casual?

**DS** – At weekends the Duty Manager will go out to speak to members/guests if needed and is on patrol.

**MN** – Policing is tricky, and the golf marshal assists during the week. Visiting match teams can only be told but not enforced to adhere to our dress code. Notices are on every court and spare white shirts are behind reception to give out if necessary.

Meeting concluded at 8.40pm and AH thanked all present.