



Chair's Annual Report – 2016/17

It has been a momentous year for Sherborne Tennis Club - a successful year on and off court, and a busy year for the club's management team. This report tells you more about what your club's volunteer management team has been doing on your behalf during the year, and the priorities for the coming few years.

I hope that you find this report informative, and perhaps thought provoking. This report will be presented (by means of a much shorter verbal summary) at the Club's Annual General Meeting to be held on Friday 1st December at 7.30 p.m. at the Club house. I will be very happy to address any questions that you may have at the meeting. I hope to see you there.

Nick Chapman

November 2017

Chair

Development of Facilities

The project to expand and renew the club's facilities has successfully been completed, and the club can now reasonably claim to have amongst the best facilities of any club in Dorset.

During the year the following projects were undertaken:

- Taking over full responsibility for the Town Council's courts; completing the resurfacing and floodlighting of the old Town Council courts, and introducing a new public 'pay and play' scheme via on line booking and electronic code-entry access.
- Replacing the club's tarmac courts with new artificial clay courts
- Renewing all fencing, gates and structural boundary walls, providing step-free access throughout
- Building a new clubhouse, with expanded facilities and creature comforts, including licensed members bar, kitchen, W.C. and comfy seating.
- Building the indoor enclosure for the mini court and hitting wall

These developments were given the most enormous kick-start by the hugely generous donation of £120,000 from the Robinson family, to whom the Club owes a significant debt of gratitude.

The Sherborne Town Council was also extremely helpful and supportive of the club's plans. Without this support, the club would not have been able to proceed. In particular, the work of the Town Clerk, Trevor Savage, was instrumental in moving plans on effectively, and we are very grateful to him for this.

The Club was well served by the many contractors that undertook the works – in particular Courtstall (laying the courts, fencing and surrounds), Ben Smith (Electrical), Bourton Fencing (the Clubhouse structure) and DMI Steel Fabrication (the indoor mini court structure). Trevor Kiddle, the Grounds man at the Terraces was ever present to offer practical facilitation when needed.

On Court

On court, the club also had a successful year, bringing home some silverware by winning league and knockout titles, as well as seeing the courts used more and club sessions well attended.

This year saw the establishment of the new roles of the Men's and Ladies Club Captains – responsible for playing activities throughout the club. This innovation seems to have been well received, and we are grateful to both Debbie Culver and Nick Lamb for taking on the roles.

Team selection during the year was based on the combination of a willingness to commit to play regularly in teams and match-winning ability. An additional emphasis was also been given to bringing on some of the older juniors to play in the Y&D leagues. Overall, the club ran 19 adult and junior teams during the summer, and three over the winter, with over 100 club members taking part in matches.

The results during the summer were that the club won 6 trophies: Mixed A (Y&D Knockout); Ladies A (Y&D Div 2), Men's B Y&D Div 2,

Men's C (Y&D Div 4), 10U Mini Greens (Aegon Dorset Div 2), 14U Boys (Aegon Dorset Div 1). Well done to all those involved.

The Club was recognised by the LTA as having an outstanding record for supporting the Aegon Junior league – one of 37 clubs nationally and the only one in Dorset to be recognised in this way.

The club hosted a number of LTA recognised tournaments during the year, and held our own Club Closed tournament in early September.

Club sessions on Monday and Friday evenings were also well attended during the year, and by popular request an additional club session was instituted on Wednesday mornings. Practices for match players and aspiring match players were held weekly throughout the winter – ensuring that teams were ready to play at their best straight away at the start of Spring.

To judge by the way that club members have voted with their feet, the artificial clay courts have been a popular choice. Whilst the new macadam courts are playing well too, the artificial clay seems to be kinder on players physically, firmer underfoot, whilst also helping playing technique by giving more time to hit the ball.

Club members were again able to use the excellent grass courts of Sherborne Boys School during July and August. The on-going partnership between the club and the Boys school is something that it is hoped can go from strength to strength, and similar win-win partnerships with other schools developed.

There has been a slow but steady stream of non-members using the 'pay and play' system to access the macadam courts. It is hoped that this will grow with more publicity, and that some people who access the courts in this way will graduate to become full members.

Managing and Supporting the Club

To move the club forward the club's management team undertook a significant number of activities during the year (this list is not exhaustive):

- Negotiating a new 40 year lease (to 2047) with the Town Council, at a peppercorn annual rental.
- Successfully applying for grants from the LTA, Sport England, Sherborne Town Council, West Dorset District Council, Dorset LTA.
- Negotiating two 10-year loans from the LTA, totaling £93,000.
- Building up detailed specifications for the development works required, interviewing and selecting contractors, and technical advisers and coordinating their activities on site as needed
- Liaising with the LTA
- Establishing a new 3-year agreement with the Club's coaches, Matt Long and Stu Wilson, to put the use of the club's facilities for coaching on a firm foundation
- Implementing on line court schedules and booking
- Managing on line membership
- Developing a new membership scheme for members approval to make the benefits of membership much clearer, to recognise the journey that younger players go through when they first take up

the game, and to make the club more financially viable and easier to administer.

- Setting up the 'pay and play' system for public access to court 5 to 8
- Revamping the club's website and publicity
- Regular newsletters by email to all club members
- Reviewed child protection arrangements/DBS certification
- Liaison with LTA referee David Kirkman over tournaments
- Applying for a license and setting up a members bar
- Taking on a regular cleaner for the clubhouse
- Organising the opening day for the new facilities
- Establishing new maintenance routines for the courts, and liaison with the Grounds man at the Terraces

The remarkable transformation of the club's facilities and the on-going success of the club can only happen as the result of the hard work and great teamwork amongst the club management team. Much of this may be unseen, so I should like to record my grateful thanks as Chair to all those that contributed so much of their time and expertise during the year:

- Russell Willson (Development Team leader, Acigne Exchange)
- Graham Briden (Development Team member and club maintenance lead)
- Claire Reid (Development team member and membership secretary)
- Yvonne Henderson (Treasurer)

- Harold Clarke (Court Booking Secretary)
- David Vincent (ball supply, and running teams)
- Debbie Culver (Ladies Club Captain)
- Nick Lamb (Men's Club Captain and bar-keeper)
- Karen Williams (Minute Secretary and recycling queen)
- Nicky Sclater (Joint Junior Chair)
- Neil Giddings (Joint Junior Chair and Club Welfare Officer)

In addition, to the members of the management team, there are many others who worked on the club's behalf during the year:

- Fiona Morgan for her work on the Acigne exchange
- Jane Tearle for organising the Evergreen charity tournament
- Paul Langford for developing commercial sponsors for the club
- Roger Cowley organising club night members
- Tina Duncan for taking on the club house
- Jill Major for finals day catering
- David and Nichole Lyscom for taking on the American Tournaments
- Kerry Mullen, for organising the Club clothing
- and all those who took on the roles of captaining teams, adult and junior.
- Humble apologies to anyone that I have mistakenly overlooked to mention here!

I should like also to record my thanks to Matt Long and Stu Wilson for their patience and hard work in sustaining the coaching programme throughout the inevitable disruption of the past 12 months, and for

their continuing commitment to the development of tennis and coaching at the club. Their energy and hard work, and that of their assistant coaches are real assets to the club.

Future Priorities

The fundamental building blocks of the club are now in place in terms of facilities, systems and agreements.

The first priority is to ensure that these facilities are well maintained, well publicised and that the club can sustain these facilities for the longer term. Hopefully, existing members will enjoy the improvements and their use and enjoyment of the club will grow.

However, beyond this, the club now needs to grow the number of people using the club, as members, guests or as members of the public. This will bring with it greater financial sustainability for the club, and will further the fundamental aim of the club to promote the game of tennis.

The town of Sherborne is growing, as a quick glance at the extent of house building confirms. We will aim to attract more people who want to play tennis from four specific groups:

Keen existing players: LTA experience is that adults who are keen on tennis will join a club like Sherborne, because they can see that they are more likely to get what they want from it than perhaps other clubs that are less well set up. Provided that we continue to get the basics right in terms of maintaining what we now have, keeping up our profile, being

friendly and welcoming, and relatively well organised, we should see the number of members in this group grow.

Beginners and re-joiners: There are many adults who could value tennis just as a regular form of exercise, or as a social activity with a group of friends. Such people may not have played tennis before or perhaps not recently, and who would not describe themselves as keen on tennis. We need to find ways of making the club attractive for such people to come and try out the facilities and join-in in a way that works for them. Special emphasis is needed on beginners, or people who have not played in a long time, and/or who are initially not confident to step onto a court. The coaching programme is an important ingredient to this, as are 'taster' events like the great British Tennis weekend, and enabling people who are like-minded to get to know each other. We should give thought to how induction of such people into the club might work better, and ensure that our website gives the right impression to this group of potential users.

Mini tennis players – 8, 9 and 10 year-olds. These are the kids that we hope will grow up wanting to play tennis regularly. The coaches already have good links with all of the primary schools in the area, and hopefully recruitment of boys and girls into mini tennis will grow. The indoor mini court is a great facility should help significantly with this. It means that mini programmes can be organised by the coaches in the sure knowledge that whatever the weather throws up, sessions can be guaranteed. Beyond regular coaching squads, it is hoped that regular club sessions, match-play and tournament-play can be continue to be organised. This will need a greater input of parents and volunteers.

Juniors (14 to 18 year olds): Juniors who have graduated up from mini programmes need to be encouraged to stay with tennis and enjoy playing tennis with each other, as well as attending regular coaching squads, playing matches and tournaments. Much as with mini-tennis players, the quality of the coaching programmes is key, but many of the activities that will add value will depend on volunteers and parents being prepared to put in the time to help organise and supervise (e.g. matches and junior club sessions). The club already encourages parents to play with their kids – by entitling the parents of junior members to play with their kids at the club even if they are not themselves members. The adult side of the club can also play its part by being welcoming to younger players joining in as of right to club sessions and in team selection. We will want to strengthen our links with all of the schools in the area, to encourage them to use the club's facilities.

Member's views on these and other aspects of the future priorities of the club are most welcome.

Nick Chapman