

My Closing Newsletter

Here we are at the anniversary of the club's first lockdown and I would not normally be writing at this very late stage in my 3-year term, but of course, the last 12 months have been very unusual and there are still some closing messages to share with you all.

We have all individually experienced an extremely challenging year as a result of the pandemic including a mix of physical, mental and financial challenges. In addition to this, we have not been able to play our chosen sports or visit the clubhouse to the extent that we would want or expect.

The pandemic, and the series of lockdowns that started in March 2020, led us in committee to question the continued viability of the Club. We had to make some difficult trade-offs as we sought to offer members a rebate for the time that they couldn't play their chosen sport, continue to invest in the Club and try to maintain subscription rates at their 2019 levels. We utilised the Government, LTA and Squash England support that was available. We looked for and found, certain cost savings although most of these will not be too visible to members. The result is that the main constituent in our rebate thinking was what the club could afford.

Above all, we were extremely grateful for the support of our members in paying their subscriptions last year. Unfortunately, some members decided not to renew but the upside was that new members did join throughout the year. Even so, we approach the new membership year with some trepidation.

In addition to the improvements to the facilities of the club mentioned in the Treasurer's and Secretary's reports to the AGM, I think that we have continued the good work of previous administrations in modernising aspects of the club. The club is still progressing and making itself more transparent in the proposed new Constitution. There is still work to do in this area and I am hopeful that the new team will take this initiative forward. Beyond this, I am particularly hopeful that the social side of the club will return to life during 2021 to bring back lots of activity and fun into the clubhouse and allow the socialising we all crave but of course, this will only be possible when the pandemic is under control.

I am extremely grateful to all the volunteers who have enabled the club to function over the last 3 years and in many cases for much longer. My special thanks go to the members of the main committee, some who have already stepped down, some will do so in a day's time and to those who remain in their role. This list includes Antionette Fisher (Sec), David Tait (Tennis), Mark Horobin (House), Jackie Parry (Tennis), Fiona Wyatt (who had challenging roles in Welfare as well as Tennis co-Chair), Nino Barbieri (what an impact his Team Bar provided), Steve Gibbs (S & R), Doug Gibson (controlling our communications output, website development and undertaking club surveys), Charles Pontifex (for also stepping up to House Chairman as well as running Grounds), Lynn Williams for 20 plus years of diligent membership work, Peter Lyons for introducing our new Accounts package and always guiding us through the financial minefield, and Tony Lucas for so much dynamism in bringing in Bookit on time and budget and really tackling our antiquated Constitution and Codes & Procedures.

The Club does not function without its subcommittees who organise our court play, our teams and tournaments and our facilities. Guided by Jackie Parry (Tennis) and Steve Gibbs (S & R) and assisted by all their stars and team captains in handling the daily work, I thank you all - particularly Roy Clark, Rogue Santana-Vaz and Allan Hitchcock who run the various annual and other in-house tournaments. Court administration has been run by Lynn Brown against the backdrop of all the changes brought

about by 3 lockdowns and a new Bookit system. Most of our legendary tennis match suppers have been provided by Shirley Davies, so my gratitude to all.

Beyond the above, there are numerous others I really want to thank specifically. Bev Grove for maintaining our kitchen to make it fit for daily use. Jane Bishop and Della Weston for the Courtside Cafe, Robert Thompson for the club clothing sales, Graham Tait for organising tennis balls, Mary Baird for the running of the 200 Club, Sarah Nolan for the running of Wimbledon Ballots, Della again looking after our social media presence, and the huge number of hours spent by Laurie Goldsworthy in the Subscriptions Office. Team Bar including Geoff Stockton, Malcolm Snelling, Mike Haines and Jane did so much good work, with Sheila & Dave Farrier, and Laurie on stock control. Club Sponsorship was coordinated by Phil Smith with Malcolm again. Welfare and Safeguarding duties have been taken on by Cara Bowley and Lauren Reilly. I and my colleagues have also had major inputs on one-off projects from the likes of Stewart Millman (website), Ian Beardmore (maintenance and cabling), Rob Robotham (aircon), Jean Badman (court lights planning), Peter Scott, Andrew Thompson (both facilitators), Clive Socks (recruitment) and Dave again (tractor and maintenance). Key to running the tennis at the President's Tournaments were Lisa Eyre and Suzanne Weatherhead. My very great thanks to all and my apologies for anyone I have missed, but this list does just indicate how many volunteers the club relies on to make it all happen.

As I come to the end of my term as president, I believe that the club is in a stronger place now than it was when I took on the role. I am very optimistic for the Club's future and I would like to wish the Club and all its members every success. I will still be frequenting the club, but due to a pair of creaky knees, I reckon I will still not be playing either of my sports in the near future. But I do look forward to some proper relaxation time in the bar chatting with my friends and colleagues of so many years.

Lastly, I thank Steve Williams (as nominated president), John Bagley, Bruce Hopkin, Della Weston and Lynn Brown who are all standing at the AGM as nominees for the vacant committee positions and if these roles are confirmed then I know the club will remain in safe hands.

Thank you all

Alistair Fitton (almost ex-president)