

# 2024 AGM – PRESIDENT’S ADDRESS

Report on the Club’s activities over the past year from Mike Bourne.

## MEMBERSHIP

Adult membership remained stable during the year, as we have reached our agreed limit of 350 members in the Full and Under 26 categories. However, our waiting list has now increased to well over 100 people – a good indication of the health and popularity of the club.

Junior and cadet membership has increased to over 450 members and is effectively limited by availability of spaces on the junior term programme which is now mostly full with its own waiting list. In February we ran a club survey and received 145 responses from a good cross section of members. That is a better response than in previous years.

There is too much detail in the survey to share in this meeting, but I want to draw attention to one result – The Net Promoter Score. This is a measure of overall satisfaction with the club. The score of 55 is down slightly from our last survey 2 years ago, but is still a very positive and pleasing result. A small team, lead by Ian, has compiled a list of conclusions and recommendations which will be reviewed at the next Committee meeting. You can expect to see some changes as a result.

Looking forward, from 2025 we have decided to start the membership year one month earlier, on 1st April, rather than 1st May. This corresponds to the clocks going forward which is the natural start of the tennis summer season. The change also gives more time to admit new members before the club tournament starts and extends the time available for the tournament to run, thus removing some pressure on courts. The change means that the subscriptions for 2024 will be for an 11 month period.

I would like to thank **Ian**, our Membership Secretary, for the fantastic job he continues to do, not only on membership matters, but also in developing and running our IT systems.

## JUNIORS AND COACHING

Ollie, our Head Coach, and his team have had another busy year.

First and foremost, Ollie wants to thank club members for their amazing support during Harry's recent hospital stay. The genuine warmth and concern shown for Harry, his family, and the rest of the team demonstrates the unique nature of Coombe Wood and its members. A special word of thanks also must go to Ed and Joe for all their extra hard work during this period.

Thankfully, our coaching team is now back to full capacity and, with the exception of a handful of cadet places, all our classes are now full and we are having to operate a waiting list. Ollie will continue to look for ways that as many members as possible can access some form of coaching. However, it is to be applauded that our small team manages to deliver such a wide range of options already - to adults, juniors and teams - even as demand continues to increase.

Our only room for growth is in our Cadet membership. Last year, we identified that numbers had been slowly declining. I am pleased to report that, due to a lot of hard work by Ollie with the support of Ian, the club has already doubled its Cadets to 158 players. This was achieved through a successful social media campaign. We will continue to work on bringing in new blood to the club at this youngest level. It is to be noted that parents joining the club have mentioned that our junior programme is of a significantly higher quality than our surrounding competitors, and our coaching team deserves praise for maintaining such high standards.

The quality of our coaching has definitely paid off in terms of team competitiveness. In the juniors, we have registered 17 teams for this summer's league, which is the highest number of team in recent years. Our winter season still continues, with our last remaining team in the competition, and I would like to wish 'good luck' to our

16U girls team, who will be competing in the final of the national junior league team trophy.

Indeed, we are incredibly proud of all our players, and this highlights that Coombe Wood continues to be a leading club in the area.

Our community spirit should be celebrated too, particularly our efforts to make tennis inclusive for all. The club has dedicated 40 minutes of court time every week for children with disabilities and special educational needs, led by our coach Natasha Sherrard. Recently, these SEND players were invited to the National Tennis Centre to participate in the Bright Ideas for Tennis 24-hour marathon, where they had a two-hour session with top tennis players, including Kyle Edmund.

The positive feedback we have received from parents about the impact on their children's participation and enjoyment has been truly heartwarming. Your support for this initiative as club members is invaluable and Ollie extends his personal gratitude to the club and all members who took part in volunteering and fundraising to make sure this has been a huge success.

Many thanks to Ollie, and the rest of his coaching team, Harry, Ed and Joe, for all their hard work over the year. We are very lucky to have such a fantastic team who do a wonderful job and help to make such a lovely family atmosphere around the club.

## TOURNAMENT AND TEAMS

There continues to be a strong demand for playing competitive tennis at the club with great competition for team places.

The club teams enjoyed a successful year. The Men's 1st team came top of division 5 in both the summer and winter leagues, gaining promotion back to the top tiers of the leagues.

The ladies teams performed strongly, with all 4 weekend league teams finishing 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> in their divisions during the summer. In the Winter, the 3rds finished top of

their division, and the 2nds, 4ths, and midweek teams all finished as runners-up in theirs. Our brand new Ladies' 5th team came 3rd in their division this winter, in spite of being put into the East Surrey League and having to travel to East London for some matches.

We had another major success in that our Mixed Knockout Team won the Surrey Tier 2 Knockout competition this winter.

Well done to all those teams - quite an achievement. We are now in the process sorting out teams to compete in the Summer 2024 Surrey and National Leagues.

There were also notable successes for some of the club's players in other competitions. Bob Blunden was part of the Surrey County team that won the Men's Over 75s National Inter-County knock-out tournament for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in succession. And Natasha Sherrard won the women's doubles in her age group in the Surrey knock-outs in the summer. Congratulations to Bob and Natasha.

### ***Tournament:***

Final's Day was once again a big success and one of the highlights of the year. We again had first-time winners in each singles event. Audrina Neeladoo became the youngest ever ladies' singles champion at the age of just 11, and Trung Nguyen is the new men's champion, beating 15 year old Stefan Suvei in an epic 3 set match.

The singles box leagues continue to be incredibly popular. Thank you to Jon Rushforth and Mark Fox running these.

Thanks also to Louise and Gary Jordan for their work ordering and ensuring new tennis balls are regularly available, as well as to Andy Brownen for sending the used balls to be recycled.

Many thanks to Jan Stewart, our Match Secretary, for all her hard work running the tournament and teams.

## WELFARE AND SAFEGUARDING

Val Jermy is now standing down as Welfare Officer after 6 years in the role and Kerry Ono, who has been a committee member for the last two and half years, has very kindly agreed to take over this vital role.

We continue to work closely with the LTA to follow guidelines and best practice in child safeguarding. Our core Safeguarding and other policies have recently been updated and are available on the website. Please see these policies for details of how to report a concern, or you can contact Kerry directly if you ever need to.

I would like to thank Val for the tremendous work she has done over the last 6 years, Val is one of the unsung heroes of the committee. Although her contribution might sometime go unnoticed by the wider membership, I can't emphasise enough just what a valuable role she has played. We were very fortunate to have someone with Val's experience to take on the role at the time the LTA were expanding the scope and importance of club Welfare Officers and introducing the minimum safeguarding standards that are now required for all clubs. As well as performing the core safeguarding responsibilities, Val has worked hard to ensure our key policies are kept up to date, and provided valuable guidance to the committee on welfare related matters.

## SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Social events were restricted in the early part of the year while the terrace work was taking place.

The first main event of the year was a successful and fun quiz night held in June, which raised over £400 in support of the club's disability tennis sessions. Many thanks to Matt and Skye Pickin for running the event.

Junior qualifying day was a well attended and fun day for the players and their families.

Finals day was a great success, despite the rain which delayed the start of play. Members enjoyed sandwiches, tea and cakes on the new terrace during the day with

an external caterer serving burgers from the BBQ in the evening. Pimms flowed throughout proceedings as usual.

This year, Finals Day will be held on July 13<sup>th</sup>, with Junior Qualifying slightly earlier than usual on Sunday June 9<sup>th</sup>. As always, we welcome volunteers to help with providing refreshments and manning the bar at these events.

The 'End of Summer' party was once again a popular event and a highlight of the social year. Please hold 14<sup>th</sup> of September in your diaries for a similar event this year. More details will be provided nearer the time.

Many thanks to **Nandini** for all of the exceptional hard work she puts in as Social Secretary to make these events a success. Nandini has announced that she intends to stand down as Social Secretary after 7 years in the role. She has, however, very kindly agreed to stay on for a period of handover to Eniola Sanwa, who it is proposed will take over as Social Secretary later in the year.

## BRIDGE CLUB

During the year the bridge club, which had been playing exclusively online since Covid, resumed face-to-face play in the club house, meeting on the first Tuesday of each month. This year we entered two teams in the Surrey Tennis Club Bridge League and finished in second and third places. The bridge club is always looking for new members and if you are interested, contact Ian Stewart.

I would like to thank Jan and Ian for running this so successfully.

## GROUPS AND FACILITIES

Two major projects were successfully undertaken during the year.

The new Terrace was completed in June 2023, just in time for finals day after several months of work. This was an essential project as the old terrace needed constant repair. We now have a more modern approach, with improved lighting and considerably enhanced space for potential increased social activities in the future.

The planting will mature over the next year or two to soften the edges, and continue to create a very welcoming theme for the club. Additional planting, where necessary will be added. Many thanks to Chris Lewis for leading this project on behalf of the committee and to Nikki Dobson for her great work on the design and project management. Thanks also to Allan Lloyd who was regularly on hand to help, especially with ensuring the new planting and grass areas were regularly watered.

The 2nd project, which took place in the Autumn, was to replace the floodlights on all courts with LED bulbs. This was another essential project, to move to a modern, environmentally friendly solution, leading to better light coverage and reduced running costs. Many thanks to John Lewis for leading this project.

In addition to these projects there has been lots of general work on the grounds as usual. Tree lopping took place early this year to severely cut back all over-hanging branches. Our thanks to Willow Landscape for organising this, as well as continuing to maintain all grassed areas and plant borders.

In February, a group of volunteers gave up a few hours to fill a skip with redundant clutter.

Thanks are due to Slava for his work on court maintenance and to David King who has recently taken over the role.

A quick request for help. Planting of summer pots on the terrace always brings colour. BUT we do need help with watering these pots in dry spells. If any members are able to volunteer to help water these when at the club – it only takes 15 minutes but WILL make a huge difference - please let Chris Lewis know.

Chris Lewis, our Grounds Secretary works incredibly hard throughout the year to ensure our courts and grounds remain in such fantastic condition. I would like to thank her for her great work on this as well as for doing such a fantastic job on the terrace this year.

## GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE REVIEW

Work has continued to develop our plans for significant changes to the club's governance structure. As previously announced, we plan to convert to a company limited by guarantee, review and update the club rules, streamline the committee structure and recruit a club manager. Rob will provide more details in his presentation.

## FINANCES

I would now like to touch on our finances. I am very pleased to say that, thanks to the efforts of the committee and the continued excellent financial management by our Honorary Treasurer, Paul Baxter, the club's finances remain in a very healthy state, even after having funded two major projects in the past year.