

STEEP LAWN TENNIS CLUB
Minutes of the Annual General meeting
Held on Tuesday 22 November 2016 in Steep Village Hall

Present: Graham Heath (Chairman), Jennie Azevedo, Peter Clist, David Gaterell, Christine Lally, Michele Mangham, David Panton, Graham Swan, Lesley Whyte and 13 other members.

1) **Apologies for absence** received from Sue Amesbury, Eric Dempster, Beryl Risley, Rosemary Swan, Kirsty Thomas, David and Brenda Walker.

2) **Minutes** of AGM 24 November 2015. These had been circulated to members with their Handbooks in the spring. They were accepted as an accurate record and signed accordingly.

3) **Matters arising.** There were none

4) **Chairman's Overview**

GH welcomed members to the meeting and introduced any committee members who were unknown to the audience.

2016 had been a positive year for the club. The mix-ins on Tuesday and Thursday evenings had had higher attendance, for which thanks were due to Mike Boyce for his organisation and encouragement. A new format for junior club night had increased attendance. There had been a lot of inter-club competitive tennis with good participation in club teams. On a personal note, he had taken over the organisation of the mixed A team from the summer season 2016 and had helped keep the team in the same division!

He thanked the committee for its dedication and hard work. He noted that none of the elected positions required re-election that year: all five were filled until the next AGM. However it was likely that one or more of those will not seek re-election in 2017. Graham Swan and Lucy Fatkin were both stepping down. He wished to thank them both, particularly Graham, for his many years of dedicated support. That would leave two posts to be filled. He said that all volunteers would be very welcome.

He was asked whether it would ever be possible to put lights on courts 7 and 8. He said that the planning permission for lights on 5 and 6 had made it very plain that permission was unlikely for 7 and 8. However, that had been 5 years previously and committee would reconsider this.

5) **Committee Members' Reports**

Membership

MM was disappointed to report a drop of membership from 552 at the 2015 AGM to 514 at this. This comprised 326 adults, 23 students, 143 Juniors and 22 Non-Playing. Usually, some 100 to 115 members left, and were more than replaced, giving a slightly rising membership total. The 514 figure reflected slightly more leavers and slightly fewer joiners. This trend was worst in the Junior section, with a net drop of 40, compared to a net adult drop of 9. In total 89 adults joined, about a quarter past members.

Renewal and payment of subscription by email had worked well and would continue. She asked to be told of any change of email address, particularly if the flow of emails from the club had stopped..

The LTA would renew British Tennis Memberships automatically. However, members would have to opt-in to the ballot. Even if not interested in attending Wimbledon, it helped the club get more tickets.

The club ballot had again gone well in spite of the weather. She was intending to run the event a bit later in 2017 hoping for kinder weather.

Social

JA said that 2016 had been a bumper year for social events, with very good member support.

It had started with the curry evening in March, a well-attended winter favourite. The Spring barbecue and Wimbledon ballot had followed. Thanks were due to those members who helped with the cooking and serving on the day despite poor weather. Unfortunately, in July, the Pimms and deluxe tea did not take place for the Championship finals day. September saw a new event, the Italian evening at La Piazzetta which proved to be a great success. Finally the return of the quiz night earlier that month was an absolute sellout with people on the waiting list, on top of the reserved 12 tables of 6. David Kidd was an excellent quizmaster. She understood he would be very happy to take on this role again. She had booked him for 2017.

For 2017, she and Lesley Whyte were looking to introduce a skittles evening.

The tea rota had worked very well with all the summer Saturdays covered. Generously, in a couple of situations where volunteers were unavailable, one of the pairs did an extra duty and regular Saturday afternoon players stepped in to fill a gap. She would appreciate a few more volunteers as a few longer-serving volunteers had decided to step down. Mary Sellers had very kindly agreed to continue in her role as coordinator for this wonderful club tradition.

Fixtures

DM reported that Steep continued to have very strong participation by its members for inter-club matches in the East Hants Tennis League. More than 60 people had been involved, in the main very successfully.

The previous winter eight teams had participated, two Men's, three Ladies', two Mixed and a Vets'. The results were that: both Men's teams had remained in Div 1; the Ladies' A team had won Div 2; but unfortunately the Mixed B team had been demoted back to Div 2 after a season in Div 1.

In summer 2016 the same eight teams had played: both Men's teams remained in Div 1; the Ladies A team would return to Div 2 in the summer of 2017 after demotion; the Ladies C team had won the division and promotion from Div 5 (meaning both the Ladies B and C teams would be in Div 4 in summer 2017); the Mixed A and B teams would remain in Div 1.

Tournaments

The Chairman reported on Tournaments.

As those present would know, the planned finals day had had to be moved. Unfortunately, it had not then been possible to run as too many finalists were not available. He regretted that. However, finals had been run and he wished to congratulate the winners, namely:-

Ladies' Singles - winner Jane Martin, runner up Louise Braithwaite

Men's Singles - winner - Ollie Fernandez, runner up - Barry Carter

Mixed Doubles - winners - Barry Carter and Lucy Fatkin, runners up Ann Saunders and Duncan Read

Ladies' Doubles - winners - Ann Saunders and Jeannie Crook, runners up Tanya Heath and Julia Fitzgerald

The Men's doubles had yet to be played.

Juniors/Coach

DG was pleased to say that the number of competitive players, both junior and senior, had increased. As a result, two junior teams had been entered to an LTA Winter Junior League: he hoped these would become an AEGON Junior team in the spring and summer of 2017. Although the adult AEGON team had finished in a lowly position, more adults had come forward wishing to play. He would enter a second team in 2017, hoping to include some of the older juniors.

Steep had entered a team into the Junior Club Challenge and hosted the event in 2016. This was organised by coaches and had now run seven consecutive years. He congratulated the juniors on winning it for the third time.

He had been particularly pleased by successful innovations with Junior Club Night, which had addressed two problems: numbers had been declining for some time, despite a variety of new ideas being introduced; several young players wanted to play matches but could not enter tournaments. He had started to offer age category match play events alongside club night, free to players entering. It had been a tremendous success, allowing juniors to play in their own age group and the next one up. He did not know of any other club in Hampshire offering this at present and was convinced this had allowed Steep to enter junior teams into official leagues for the first time.

The summer camps had enjoyed good fortune, losing little time to the weather. These had had the by-product of bringing some parents into the club.

Overall, junior numbers attending coaching were very good, with some sessions at maximum numbers. Having a team of coaches meant that lots of opportunities could be offered. Adult numbers at improver/intermediate level were steady. A beginners' group had started and some one-off team practices had run. He intended to offer more practices and clinics as the weather improved in the spring.

Grounds

DP reported that:

- The hedging would be cut shortly
- The courts would be sprayed shortly thereafter
- In addition, 7 and 8 would be power-washed
- A defibrillator would be installed shortly

There was a question about the net bands on 5 and 6. In particular, the adjustment holes were so placed that they could not be adjusted to the correct height. DP to discuss with CTS.

A second question concerned the lights on court indication that the lights were about to go out. DP said that 5 and 6 were working, and 3 and 4 had recently been returned to working order. He would check and address 1 and 2.

GH then referred to the 5 Year plan, introduced in 2014. In 2016, year 2 of the five, the astro courts had been refurbished. The remaining years showed:-

- 2017 resurface courts 7&8
- 2018 redecorate the clubhouse and re-paint courts 1&2
- 2019 replace the surface on courts 3&4

He knew that the astro courts aroused strong views amongst members. His views were added to from the floor. They included: a belief that they were used less than the other courts (confirmed by MM); regret that the club teams did not use them; a note that they were not usable in wet periods; a wish to have four hard courts alongside each other for AEGON matches and Finals Day (JG); disappointment that two of the courts with lights were used less than the other four; opinion that astro was not really suitable for coaching (DG). He proposed appointing a working party, with wide-ranging terms of reference, to recommend a future for courts 3 and 4. That party would include a wide variety of opinions.

Secretary

PC reported a number of complaints at the beginning of the season about bonfire smoke on 7 and 8. Clearly this was a concern both for juniors and for coaches, whose place of work it was. He had contacted East Hants' Environmental Health. They had asked for photographs and samples of any debris. They had also offered to come out if this occurred in the working day. Fortunately, the nuisance now seemed to have stopped.

He had polled members about support for a dinner dance or barn dance. 10 had supported a dinner dance, 12 a barn dance. This was too little support to proceed.

There had been discussion with the Cricket Club about the drive. The Cricket Club believed it owned the drive, with SLTC having a right of way over it. SLTC believed the reverse, advised by a lawyer member who had seen the original Land Registry document. After this had been said at a face to face meeting, there had been no more communication.

The club had been contacted in connection with a possible tournament for older primary age children in the summer of 2017, asking to hire courts. After discussion, the club had refused, concerned about inappropriate footwear being worn on courts that had all been refurbished or re-laid recently.

He had been involved with trying to set up a Junior Exchange link with his former club in Pasing, Munich, Germany. The exchange had been running with Liphook TC as the English partner, with seven successful visits, but Liphook had now withdrawn. He and DG had contacted potential players and their parents and found six volunteers, one girl and five boys. He had discussed the mix of genders, ages and abilities with the Pasing coach. Unfortunately, Pasing could only match one, possibly two, of the Steep players. With such small numbers, the idea had been abandoned.

Website

GS reported that, earlier that year, he had 'freshened up' the website using a new software package, and in conjunction with a local graphic-designer. He hoped members would agree that it was a significant improvement. Since then he had kept the website up-to date with Club news, Events and links to Matches, Tournaments and the Booking System. His aim was to make the website attractive to potential new members and informative for the present membership. He was certainly receiving more feedback than previously thanks to the 'give feedback' button. He welcomed all comments or ideas for potential inclusion.

He had acted as overall "administrator" of the online court booking system, now operational for two tennis seasons: the court booking part ran well; registration seemed a stumbling block for some, generally because of misreading the instructions. Current members registered to use the system numbered 130 Adults and 49 Family Groups making a total of just over 200 individuals. In this role he had worked closely with Michele Mangham who not only provided regular updates for the membership database but also did all the "block bookings" for matches, coaching and other events. He wished to say a big thank-you to her.

Finally he had told the committee that he would stand down from both his roles from the AGM, so "fresh faces" would be needed. The jobs were not directly linked so it would be possible to split the roles between two people.

6) Treasurer's Report

CL reported that the income and expenditure account showed a small surplus of just over £3,300. Subscription income was slightly down year on year, thanks to a net loss of members, but there had been no significant expenditure on the courts, in line with the 5 year plan. The club remained in a healthy financial position, with bank and building society balances at the year-end totalling approx. £64k.

BR proposed that the accounts be accepted, seconded by JR. Motion carried unanimously.

CL proposed that the auditor, John Forgan, be reappointed for the following year. Motion seconded by GS and carried unanimously.

CL said that she saw no need for an increase in subscriptions. In 2016, the club had trialled a discount for prompt payment which the committee had felt to be a success. She therefore proposed no change on 2016 arrangements, viz:-

Adults	£120 (£117 if paid by 1 January)
Students	£50
Juniors	£40
Family	£292 (£285 if paid by 1 January)
Non-playing	£18

Entrance (joining) fee to remain at £30.

It was agreed that no motion needed to be passed, as subscriptions were not being increased.

7) Election of committee

All five of the club's officers had been re-elected in 2015 for a two-year term. There were no other nominations.

8) Any Other Business

- a) MM raised the question of the Wednesday morning mix-in. She faithfully reserved three courts at 9.30 but had noticed that none had been occupied for the previous four weeks. She believed there was unfilled demand for courts at the same time. After discussion, it was agreed to release these courts but to reinstate one or more if there was evidence of a need to do so.
- b) CK asked if umpires' chairs could be made available on Finals' Day making the event more of an occasion. DP responded that these chairs were available. Previous tournament secretaries added that the problem was not the availability of chairs but of umpires prepared to sit in them. JG volunteered to be Tournament Secretary for 2017. He was thanked and his offer accepted.
- c) AS suggested a one-day Andy Murray tournament. Tournament Secretary to check naming rights and feasibility.
- d) AS suggested a Plate competition for first-round losers in the Men's Singles. Referred to Tournament Secretary
- e) AS asked if the club could publicise the availability of the public courts at the Avenue, now that the decision had been made not to charge for them, not to lock them and not to operate a booking system. BR aired his objections - the committee was only responsible for the club's own courts. Committee to consider.
- f) BR said that, in the unavoidable absence of the club's President, he wished to thank the committee for their hard work during the year. This met with general approval.

No items had been advised to the Secretary.

Date of Next Meeting Tuesday 21 November 2017 7.30 pm in Steep Village Hall