

STEEP LAWN TENNIS CLUB
Minutes of the Annual General meeting
Held on Tuesday 24 November 2015 in Steep Village Hall

Present: Ben Russ (Chairman), Peter Clist, Richard Hill, Christine Lally, Michele Mangham, Sharon Russ, Graham Swan, Tom Spencer and 36 other members,

- 1) **Apologies for absence** received from Ann Baker, Linda Carr, David Gaterell, Jenny Holland-Smith, Brian Peters, Helen Phillips, Maggie Sims, Kirsty Thomas.
- 2) **Minutes** of AGM 18 November 2014. 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 two:-

(2014 item 6) there had been a query as to whether the £5,000 in the 5-year plan to refurbish the astro courts was adequate. There was a further comment from those present pointing out that £20,000 was in the same plan for recarpeting the same courts. BR responded that recarpeting was a significantly bigger job than refurbishing (ie lifting the existing sand and replacing it with fresh). His enquiries suggested that £5,000 was a fair figure for refurbishment.

(2014 item 8) PC had been asked to consider placing minutes in a draft state in the folder in the clubhouse, meaning that they were available much earlier than normal. PC said that he had done this for the first two meetings of 2015. He had simply forgotten to do this for the third but had not received a single comment on any of the three occasions. He had continued with the 'old' system for the rest of the year, as it was time-consuming to ensure that every single committee member was prepared to see the minutes released early: securing approval from those on holiday had proved difficult. He had not received a single comment about the minutes in the clubhouse under either 'old' or 'new' system and had concluded that there was no demand for this.

One member asked whether PC would be prepared to email approved minutes to members on request. He said that he was. Another member asked whether the minutes could go onto the club's website, thereby saving work. BR said not: the website was open to the general public; minutes were for members.

Secretary's note. There was a query as to when the astro courts had been initially laid. This was April 2004.

4) **Chairman's Overview**

BR welcomed those present to the club's Annual General Meeting. He appreciated the efforts members and the committee had made to attend.

As usual the tennis year had been busy with lots of action on the courts, activities and events at the club and much discussion and decision making behind the scenes.

It had been a wonderful privilege to sit on the committee helping to run the club he so appreciated, but also learn of the dedication of committee members of our committee, not just time and application freely given for the meetings, but also out of hours, with contacting contractors, writing reports and minutes and dealing with the odd incident like lights failing or locks not working. The club was a well-oiled machine, the product of a team effort which he had been proud to lead in recent years and to be a part of for much longer.

He was stepping down at the present AGM after four years as Chairman but was pleased to be handing over a club that was healthy both physically - with grounds and courts in excellent condition and financially - with a sensible buffer of savings that ensured a very secure future.

5) Committee Members' Reports

Membership

MM was happy to report that the membership had increased for the first time in two years. The current total was 552, comprising 335 adults, 15 students, 182 juniors and 20 non-players. This was an increase in the total membership of 26 from 2014 and almost back to the 557 of 2013. Along with the good news, she was sad to report the death in July of Tony Hicks, a long-standing member.

Several past members had re-joined along with 11 families new to the club. Interestingly, several new members had joined in the second half of the year, rather than in the usual surge around Wimbledon.

Renewal of subscriptions by email was working well, as were payments on-line.

As far as British Tennis Membership was concerned, members did not need to renew membership itself each year_ that was now automatic. However, members needed to 'opt in' for entry to the Wimbledon ticket ballot afresh each year.

Social

SR thanked all her volunteers and remarked that, in the depths of winter, the Saturday Tea Rota for 2016 was being prepared. It was integral to the club ran smoothly and was very popular.

There was a well-attended Curry Night in March at a price of £12 per head, unchanged in 10 years. On Wimbledon Draw Day a super barbeque catered for 65 people. On Finals Day an appeal for cakes drew an amazingly generous response. She gave special thanks to Brenda Walker in this regard.

She was pleased to report that these events were self supporting: the surplus enabled her to buy bowls, cups, trays, and kettles without asking for additional funds from the club.

This was her last AGM but was pleased to announce that capable successors had been found. She was confident about the future.

Fixtures

DM reported that Steep continued to have very strong member participation for inter-club matches in the East Hants Tennis League. More than 60 people had been involved and the teams had been, in the main, very successful.

In the winter eight Steep teams had competed: two Men's, three Ladies', two Mixed and a Vets'.

Both Men's teams remained in Div 1.

The Ladies' A team was demoted to Div 2.

The Mixed B team won Div 2 . Both Mixed teams would be in Div 1 in 2016's winter league.

The Vets also won Div 1.

In the summer, nine Steep teams had competed: three Men's, three Ladies', two Mixed and a Vets'.

The Men's A and B teams would remain in Div 1

The Ladies' A team won Div 2 and would therefore be promoted to Div 1.

The Ladies' B team would drop from Div 3 to Div 4

The Mixed A and B teams remained in Div 1

Tournaments

RH reported that, as ever, there had been some difficulties in completing the earlier rounds of the Club Championship on time. Notwithstanding this, there were some greatly enjoyable matches of a high standard throughout. The Finals were held on a glorious summer's day, though fortunately not quite as hot as 2014. Spectators enjoyed Pimms followed by a spectacular afternoon tea.

The Men's singles was a re-run of last few year's contests between Jon Graham and Matt Fernandez. There was some exceptional tennis in a very closely matched contest of a high standard. Matt eventually won in three sets. Jeannie Crook proved a little too strong for Lucy Clare in the Ladies singles in a match played in a good spirit. Jeannie teamed up with Ann Saunders later to win the Ladies doubles against Jo Goodship & Natasha Harris. In the Men's doubles the 'family firm' of Matt & Ollie Fernandez took on Chris Bardoe & Matt Thompson, whose command of the net and decisive volleying gave them the winning edge. In the Mixed Doubles, Duncan Read & Ann Saunders triumphed for a remarkable tenth time. This time their opponents were Jeannie, playing in her third final on the day, with Graham Swan. Finally, the Mixed-Doubles Handicap, revived this year and hopefully with an increasing appeal to members next year, was won by James & Emily Mates in a very closely fought match three set match against Hugh & Chloe Green - a triumph for the handicappers! Trophies were presented to winners & runners-up by the club president.

Secretary's note. A summary of results is given below:-

Category	Winner	Runner-Up	Score
Men's Singles	Matt Fernandez	Jonathan Graham	6-2, 6-7, 6-1
Ladies' Singles	Jeannie Crook	Lucy Clare	6-0, 6-0
Men's Doubles	Matt Thompson & Chris Bardoe	Matt Fernandez & Ollie Fernandez	6-1 7-6
Ladies' Doubles	Jeannie Crook & Ann Saunders	Jo Goodship & Natasha Harris	6-2, 6-0
Mixed Doubles	Duncan Read & Ann Saunders	Graham Swan & Jeannie Crook	6-2, 6-4
Mixed Doubles Handicap	James Mates & Emily Mates	Hugh Green & Chloe Green	7-6, 2-6, 6-1

Junior events were organised separately, building on the format trialled over the last two years and again proved very successful.

Two Jumbles tournaments were held during the year, much enjoyed by all those who took part. The Autumn Event was held in aid of the charity Meningitis Research.

Juniors

KT could not attend in person. Her report was read out.

The junior membership had continued to thrive. She and HP had run regular pizza and barbecue nights over the summer months, all well-attended. The junior one day tournament in September had been a great success, despite a slightly smaller attendance than previously, with good tennis and a fun atmosphere. She was pleased to report the club as having enthusiastic, keen and polite junior players: she and HP hoped that all would progress to become adult members and players at Steep. She thanked the committee for the support she and HP had received during their time as Junior Representatives.

Coach

DG could not attend in person. His report was read out.

He apologised for not attending in person: he had just moved house and trusted the meeting understood.

2015 had seen good progress for the Aegon Team, who finished second overall in the County Premier Division - Steep's highest placing to date. He was particularly proud that the team consisted solely of regular Steep TC members and himself. It even included some juniors. No-one had been recruited for the sole purpose of playing in this team.

On the coaching front, they had seen some new faces in the junior sessions, attracted initially by the Easter and Summer camps. Players as young as 4 tried their hand in a less formal session than in term time, often continuing to attend in term time groups and sometimes bringing parents and siblings to the sport. The adult coaching program had remained unchanged, offering day and evening sessions for standards from beginner to advanced. With two coaches other than himself, one to one coaching was offered every day of the week: other than Sunday, coaching sessions for groups of various ages and levels were offered every day.

Singles leagues for Men and Women had been run in 2015, with good numbers enjoying competitive play. The league ran for 6-8 weeks at a time. The next league would begin in January.

Grounds

TS reported that courts 5 and 6 had been resurfaced in the summer. The work had been done to a high standard and players had reported their satisfaction. Other issues had been dealt with as they had arisen. He was pleased with the standard of work of the club's husband and wife team dealing with maintenance and cleaning of clubhouse and grounds.

Secretary

PC observed that the Wimbledon Ballot had proceeded smoothly. He had checked his records as to the number of pairs of tickets received in the last four years. From 2012 to 2015, these had been, in order, 26, 21, 17 and 33. The email sent to members inviting them to register as BT Members, even if they did not want tickets, as the allocation was based on the number of such members, had therefore been very successful. He thanked members who had responded.

He had received a verbal complaint from a member that private fours should not be allowed on Wednesday mornings, competing with the regular mix-in. It had been discussed at committee, where the prevailing opinion had been that banning private fours at that time would not produce more players for the mix-in: the private fours would simply start later. He had communicated the committee view to the member.

The committee had heard various views from members that the club's Wimbledon seats were gradually becoming of poorer quality: fewer seats in the second week; seats further from the court. It had put these both officially and privately, to the AELTC itself and to a well-placed LTA official. They had responded independently with the same view: tickets were allocated randomly, meaning that some years would be 'better' than others; the number of tickets was based on the club's total BT membership; tickets allocated to affiliated clubs were in the same sections of seating as in previous years.

Website

GS reported that the website was functioning as intended as both a 'shop window' to prospective members and a source of information to existing members.

The on-line booking system was working well, after initial teething troubles. Some 120 adults were now signed up as users, along with 43 family groups. Feedback from those present supported this.

6) Treasurer's Report

CL stated that the club remained in a healthy financial position, with just over £55,000 in the bank and building society at the end of the financial year. The income & expenditure account showed a loss of just over £13,000: this was due to a change in accounting policy. Previously repairs to the courts (resurfacing & repainting) had been capitalised and then written off over 20 years. The auditor recommended that we took the lead from

other not-for-profit organisations and treated the courts as "specialised assets", revaluing at replacement cost and charging the costs of resurfacing and refurbishment to the income and expenditure account in the year in which they were incurred. This would give a truer picture of the overall financial position.

For 2015, subscriptions had been held at the same level as 2014, but the Committee felt that we should increase them by 5% again this year to ensure that reserves were maintained at a healthy level. The proposed increases were:

Adult	£120 (up from £114)
Students	£50 (from £48)
Juniors	£40 (from £38)
Family	£292 (from £278)
Non-playing	£18 (from £17)

This year she proposed offering an incentive to members to pay their subscriptions by the due date of 1 January. Those adult and family members who paid either online or by cheque/cash by 1 January 2016 would be offered a discount as follows:

Adults	£117
Family	£285

Before this proposal was put to the vote, several members asked why an increase of 5% was necessary if inflation was close to zero and the club's finances were healthy. CL and other responded that: the increase was closer to 2.5% for those who paid on time; utility costs were most definitely not subject to zero inflation; the committee aimed at keeping roughly a year's subscription income in reserves against a downturn in fortune. The proposal on both subscriptions and the prompt payment discount was then put to a formal vote, proposed by Bob Alexander, seconded by Rosemary Swan.. 28 members voted in favour, 3 against. The motion was therefore carried.

CL then responded to other questions. One member observed that the coach wasn't on site often in return for his retainer. BR responded that the retainer was to provide a coaching service, covering all three coaches. Another asked if any team coaching was provided free of charge. CL said not. RH added that DG had been willing to provide this in the past but the pilot had not been a success: the team benefitting had not supported it as hoped. Another member noticed that guest fee income had fallen from 2014 to 2015: she had noticed guests playing who had not paid a visitor fee when she later checked the record; she urged all members to ensure that a visitor fee was paid whenever appropriate. The same member mentioned her gratitude to the Harrow pub and One Tree Books for taking and selling floodlight cards.

CL proposed to reappoint the auditor for a fourth year. This was carried unopposed.

Secretary's Note. The income and expenditure account was not formally adopted by the meeting. However, the account was received and considered by the meeting, as required by the Club's constitution.

7) Election of committee

BR said that all five officer positions, those upon which the AGM needed to vote, fell vacant at the current meeting, two because the current holders were stepping down. With the other three, the current holders were willing to continue if re-elected. In all five cases, a single nomination had been received by the Secretary. The results were as follows:-

Chairman: Graham Heath, proposed by Tanya Heath, seconded by David Mangham
Grounds: David Panton, proposed by Edward Newnham, seconded by Gerald Cordingley
Treasurer: Christine Lally, proposed by Olivia Allan, seconded by Michele Mangham
Secretary: Peter Clist, proposed by Tony Llewellyn, seconded by Richard Hill

Membership: Michele Mangham, proposed by Carol Norris, seconded by Christine Lally

All were elected unopposed.

BR continued that the other positions on committee were filled by co-option. For tournaments, where Richard Hill was stepping down, no replacement was yet in view. Similarly, no replacements were yet foreseen for Kirsty Thomas and Helen Phillips, who were also stepping down. He urged members to consider whether they could help fill these places.

On the Social Secretary position, he had better news. Jennie Azevedo and Lesley Whyte had agreed to share the role, attending alternate meetings. Mary Sellers had taken over the tea rota.

8) **Any Other Business**

No items had been advised to the Secretary. One was added during the meeting:

One member said she was disturbed by the smoke that often issued from the adjoining property during play: it was frequently acrid and unpleasant. Further, it seemed only to occur when the courts were in use. She feared for the health of players. Agreed - Secretary to take this up with East Hants District Council

Graham Heath, Chairman elect, then thanked those committee members 'retiring' at the current meeting. He thanked them all for their hard and unsung work, Richard Hill, Tom Spencer, Helen Phillips, Kirsty Thomas. He made special mention of Ben and Sharon Russ, with over twenty years of service between them. The members present roundly endorsed all these thanks.

Eric Dempster, Club President, added his thanks to Graham's. He felt that the committee had been very effective during the year. He felt he shared an important factual detail with Graham. Some years earlier he had been 'plucked from relative obscurity' as a non-committee member straight into the Chairman's role. He wished Graham every success.

Date of Next Meeting Tuesday 22 November 2016 7.30 pm in Steep Village Hall