



LYTHAM TENNIS CLUB
CHURCH ROAD LYTHAM FY8 5QD

Chairman's Report

This year has been dominated by two things - the new air bubble and the way we have had to adapt to the coronavirus pandemic.

Following last year's AGM which endorsed the decision to proceed with the 'dome', it was all systems go to ensure that everything was done in a timely manner to ensure that the bubble could be opened in September 2020.

The first stage was to fell the 2 large trees by the side of Court 4 to allow us to proceed with the ground works and having done this we then planted 6 new trees to compensate for those taken down in accordance with planning conditions. We were grateful to those who sponsored the new trees which have taken well. We then followed this by converting the floodlights on Courts 3 and 4 to LED so that there would be no waiting time in the dome if the lights went out before more tokens were put in the box. Logistically this proved to be more complex than anticipated but the work was completed and some damage to the paths and ground was repaired at the Contractor's cost.

We were now in a position to start the ground works but as had been discussed at the last AGM we also needed to find more capital from the members in the form of interest free loans and thanks to the generosity of a number of members we raised enough to ensure that we could proceed.

Work on the concrete beam around the courts started at the end of February but for reasons which are well known, these were not completed until almost the end of May. Eventually we had the concrete beam and the base for the storage shed in place together with new surround netting around the perimeter of both courts.

In the meantime, we had started to look at how we would manage the bookings for the new court and a small cross section of members were invited to look at the best system and how much we should charge. After a number of meetings their proposals were put to the Committee and were endorsed.

And so we then had to find a provider who could enable us to put into practice the system we wanted to employ and after looking at various options it became apparent that the LTA endorsed 'Clubspark management system' would provide what we wanted - all we had to do was understand how to install it and for that we were indebted to Nick Parrott whose technical advice was, and remains critical going forward.

Part of the system required us to fit a smart access gate and this was done in late August whilst CCTV was fitted in September.

And finally the dome was erected at the end of September and apart from the initial moisture problems (now seemingly resolved) all the comments I have received have been positive.

The second major issue during the year was and still is the coronavirus pandemic which stopped tennis being played from 23rd March until 13th May. The stoppage came at a time when subscriptions were due and for a short while there was some concern that if subscriptions were not paid then our financial position could be serious given our commitments in respect of the air dome. However the members were magnificent and subscriptions were paid even though we had no indication as to if and when we could resume play. Thanks to everyone concerned.

The Treasurer will report on the finances and the effect that coronavirus has had on the Accounts but I would like to thank our Subscription / Membership Secretary, Linda for all her work in collecting subscriptions and dealing with new member requests in difficult circumstances.

The Committee at all times have and will continue to promote best practice based on general Government advice and specific LTA advice (which sadly has not been as helpful as might have been expected). We know some members feel that the various protocols which have been introduced have been over the top but we felt it necessary that the Tennis Club be quite firm in promoting best practice whilst understanding that individual members might have differing views.

Anyway the result has been that, despite there being no League matches, probably as much summer tennis was played this year as in previous years, particularly during the daytime. Sadly we had to manage without social tennis this summer, something that was missed by many. The Committee felt that it just wasn't possible to ensure social distancing. However even if the rules regarding this remain in place I am certain that we will find a way to re-instate this important part of our tennis programme next year.

The decision to organise a handicap tournament was subject to debate but effectively playing for just one hour made it into a great success - the only pity was that our 'traditional' Finals Day had to be tweaked to satisfy the protocols in place.

At this stage I would like to say a massive thanks to Pam and Simon, ably assisted by Judith and Roy for their great work in organising tennis during such difficult times - they have done a fantastic job.

It seems likely that coronavirus will not go away quickly and so we have already had to change the rules we have in place to meet the differing circumstances and as I write this the latest lock down means that once again no Tennis can be played at the Club until December.

The recent restrictions on indoor tennis are making a big hole in our finances and we have enlisted the help of our local MP and certain Councillors to lobby for some of the restrictions to be lifted and also for us to be able to gain access to financial support.

Throughout the year our Secretary has been a great help and has spent much time in sending out regular updates about the courts and the pandemic as well as dealing with the normal administrative duties and of course being heavily involved in the dome booking system which with all the changes is very time consuming. He has been a great sounding board for me and always available when needed. Sincere thanks Frank.

The grass courts came into operation later than usual but the excellent weather in late May, June and early July meant not only were they in demand but also that they played exceptionally well thanks to the work of our new Groundsman. The poor weather later in the Summer meant that they did not receive too much wear and allowed us to rotate, with only 4 grass courts open at any one time. This lack of play and the renovations done in September bodes well for next season. With cricket not starting until August it also meant that it was not necessary to erect and then take down the stop netting each week but as soon as cricket restarted then Brian, with his team of Junior and Senior helpers, organised matters with his usual efficiency. Well done Brian.

Unfortunately one effect of the pandemic has been the lack of social events. The social committee of Helen, Gill and Liz have been champing at the bit to organise events but the restrictions in place have made this impossible. They did however come together to make a massive contribution to the outdoor picnic held at the end of August for Lytham Cricket & Sports Club. So the Tennis Club lost some valuable revenue but equally important was the fact that we didn't have the opportunity to enjoy some great events for which our Club is justifiably well known. Never mind ladies there is always next year!

One event that did go ahead last November was the Sportsman's lunch which was a brilliant success and raised over £8,000 towards the costs of the dome. Thanks to the organisers. Sadly plans for this year's event have had to be shelved.

Closing the courts has been a worrying time for Greg as his income was substantially reduced. However since the resumption he has been in great demand and he continues to provide a great service for the members. Unfortunately the Juniors have suffered because there have been no matches and we were unable to hold the customary tournaments. Julie remains a sterling advocate on behalf of the Juniors and I hope that next year, regardless of the circumstances, we will be able to devote more attention to our younger members.

I won't pretend that this has been an easy year. Organising the contractors for the air bubble has taken time and dealing with our response to coronavirus, particularly relating to the new restrictions involving indoor tennis, has been a burden. However

the appreciative comments from the majority of the members has meant that on balance this has been an enjoyable and fulfilling year.

Over the last 14 years we have seen the building of 6 all-weather courts, a mini court and of course now an air dome which together with our excellent grass courts make us, in terms of playing facilities, one of the premier tennis Clubs in Lancashire but what we need now of course are a Clubhouse and changing facilities to match.

As far as that is concerned there has been work going on in the background by the Lytham Cricket & Sports Club Executive regarding the Club development plan. The proposal that Clifton Bridge Club would join the club became an impossibility when it became clear that Sports England would be highly unlikely to support any development which gave them exclusivity to a specific bridge room. The latest position is that new plans have now been drawn which do not include a bridge room and costings are being prepared to establish the viability of this new scheme.

In general terms the plan, as has always been the case, is to site the new Club house and changing rooms across the corner of the two grass car park courts but only if planning consent is also given at the same time for 2 new all-weather courts on the site of the existing Gents changing rooms and existing Club house. This way we lose 2 grass courts but have the potential to gain 2 more all-weather courts, albeit that they will have to be funded by the Tennis Club.

Finally I will be stepping down as Chairman this year and handing over the reins to Simon Whitehead. I am happy to continue as Treasurer for the time being but believe that now is the time for someone who is younger and energetic to lead the new Committee.

Thank you for support over the years.

Bernard Crosby