

SSLTC Newsletter



Spring Issue, 2022

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@StonyTennisClub

Chairman's Letter

Welcome to the 2022 Spring update from your committee. Since the autumn we have tried not to bombard you with as many emails and updates after eighteen months of them with Covid and booking systems, preferring to let you just enjoy an open access club again. But we now owe you an update. We really have had everything thrown at us these past two years. Not satisfied with pestilence and flood, on October 31st tempest was added to the list. For those of you at the club or in some of the villages in the storm's path, it was a pretty worrying five or six minutes. In Deanshanger I watched a neighbour's tree land on their car and on the club's CCTV the steel cables over the Dome being ripped out of the concrete and the Dome skin torn to shreds. Thankfully those in the Dome evacuated to the safety of the clubhouse. The whole episode coming without any sort of warning and five minutes later the sun was out and the winds back down to about 5 mph.

The updates will therefore be about the Dome, the court refurbishment project, our club financial health, a short update on matches and a few other items. Coaching and juniors will be the subject of other correspondence. Not the normal format but I am keen to get this out to you this week as developments are about to happen.

I'm proud to report that despite everything we will get through this as a club. Membership remains buoyant and there continues to be healthy pressure on court usage. There is a real buzz about the club and all courts are frequently in use, whether it be for mid-week players especially on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, the junior programmes in the late afternoon, a thriving Wednesday club night, matches or Partners League, into what must be about its 25th season (I have lost count).

On the welfare front, back in November we invited the LTA to review our club safeguarding standards. Thank you to those of you that participated in their survey. I'm pleased to say they were impressed with the processes in place and we passed with flying colours. But we remain ever vigilant and if you need to raise something then please either contact our welfare officer, Dr Reddy, or follow the process detailed on our safeguarding noticeboard or !StonyMark handbook in the club. In collaboration with the football and cricket clubs, we will soon have shared access to a defibrillator, located either on the wall of the entrance cottage or croquet club. Football have secured a grant to purchase the unit and the Ancell Trust have agreed to fund its maintenance. Installation should be very soon.

We had a very successful Finals Day at the Club on Sunday 12th September celebrating our first proper social get together since release from lockdowns. Wonderful tennis and great to see the youngsters Annabel Flett and Shruthi Madham, and Annabel again with Daniel Rowland, taking the adult Ladies doubles and adult mixed doubles titles respectively. The future is bright. The Club donated the BBQ food for players, members and their friends with two hundred burgers and sausages served during the day by Joss Willis, an ex-member who kindly agreed to help with his catering expertise. A good day for everyone.

I hope you will all appreciate we are making no changes to our subscriptions yet again, pleasingly our thirteenth consecutive year of no increase. We are debt free, continue to generate positive cash flow and are therefore well positioned for the near term capital expense, thanks to the continued prudent financial management of Adrian and Phyllis.

Simon Burn, Chairman 

Money

We remain in relatively good shape considering everything that has faced the club in the last two years. We were proud of the decision to “give-back” the days missed by successive lockdowns when so many sports clubs took a different route, and are pleased to say it will make us stronger going forward. We do have some major expense ahead of us with the court refurbishment, but we are ready. Thankfully our insurers are standing by us following the loss of the Dome and we will be no worse off as a result. Confidence therefore remains high and we know the existing subscription levels will support us for another year without change.

We continue to be vigilant about our variable expense not least our energy bills which, like everyone else, are under pressure from rising prices. Having the door open under the canopy during Covid times has not helped. However we will investigate making things more efficient, whilst keeping the clubhouse warm when it needs to be, to protect us a little against our electricity bills when our fixed price contract comes to an end.

All in all, cash and cash equivalents as at December 31st are £160k, an improvement of nearly £18k since the beginning of the financial year last April. This amount is more than enough to meet our financial obligations for working capital and infrastructure improvements. Subscription income is up £2.6k on an already strong prior year, with membership hovering just above 400.

After two years where our AGMs were cancelled due to lockdown, we look forward to being able to hold one this April. Not least because we plan to present the plans and seek approval for the court refurbishment project. Our full accounts will be available by then at the meeting for those that want to take a more detailed look together with of course, the court project costs and impacts.

Stay safe and I hope to see you on a tennis court soon!

Adrian O'Reilly ✉

Ground Development

Firstly the breaking news. By the time you read this, the new replacement **Dome** should be going up again. Hurrah! It has been a long haul since 31st October's tornado. County Insurance Services assessed the damage and paid the deposit for Covair to commission a new dome skin back in November. The skin is bespoke to fit around the old medieval wall, manufactured in France, and has a long lead time. It has been touch and go whether it would make sense to put it up again this winter, the economic cut off being the end of January. Thankfully we had the call at the end of last week that all was ready for the indoor courts to be back in place. Courts 8 & 9 will therefore be out of action for part of Thursday 27th and Friday 28th, and hopefully fully operational again from this Saturday. The full cost of the replacement, around £23k, will be covered by our insurers. The Dome will remain in place through to the end of April, and once down we will order some more silicone sand to bring their surfaces back up to the required sand levels as we routinely have to do.

Tenders have been issued for the **refurbishment of Courts 1-5** in line with the majority view of members from the survey last autumn. Put simply the new courts will be the latest equivalent of what we have now, in two tone green. The whole process of selecting a supplier that can quote to our requirements, and is financially sound, has taken longer than we had wanted. However the supplier list is now narrowed to two and we plan to present the project for approval at the next AGM in April. Work will hopefully begin as we transition from the summer season to the winter programmes in the autumn, and is expected to take about a fortnight. The total project cost is in the region of £90k, which as you see from the report above is more than covered by our savings specifically set aside for this purpose.

John Taylor ✉

Teams and Matches

The winter always seems to be a little strange from a tennis perspective, more so than ever with the continued health challenges we continue to endure. There is no non-vets doubles tennis in the Bucks Shield and local MK tennis is centred around the Medley format. But here is a summary list of our successes (and soon to be successes!)

Bucks Shield 2021 and Winter 2021/2	
Ladies 1 st team	Summer: Captained by Sam Knaves, the team once again won the Bucks Shield Ladies 2 pr. They won in considerable style winning all six matches while only dropping nine sets. Well Played!
Ladies 2 nd team	Summer: the second team narrowly missed out on promotion to Division 2
Ladies 3 rd team	Summer: the third team finished mid table in their division. Juniors Annabel Flett, Shruthi Madhan, Shravanti Venkatakrisnan and Emily Marshall all represented the club with distinction in both the Bucks Shield and the MK leagues prompting someone nameless to comment "You used to be asked to play if you made a good cake, now it will be if you can drive!" Congratulations girls and well played. That said, there will be six Ladies teams playing this summer in the BS and MK leagues so drivers, cake makers and enthusiastic tennis players of all ages and abilities will find plenty of matches.
Mens O45 1st team	Currently languishing near the bottom of the Premier division, with work to do to maintain top flight status. It has not gone unnoticed that more of our competition are under 50 and we battle to find a team struggling to be under 60!! I predict we will cling on by the skin of our dentures...
Mens O45 2nd team	Will also have a challenge to maintain their presence in Div 4. Cannot make a prediction. (Well not one that is favourable!!)
Mens O60	Only one team currently, but that could soon change based on my earlier rhetoric around the O45 team. Currently mid table, but a long way to go, as matches are home and away. Predict 3rd place come the end of the season.
Bucks Shield Singles 2021/2	
Mens 1st team	Div 1: Only played one match, but I predict a 4th place finish.
Mens 2nd team	Div 2: Played 4 matches with just a single point. In a relegation struggle.
Bucks Shield Mixed 2021/2	
Mixed Div 1	Sitting comfortably in a mid-table position, predict a top 3 finish
MK Summer 2021	
Ladies Leagues	All cancelled due to Covid
Ladies Knockout	the MK Knock Out Cup was played however resulting in a very exciting final between our Ladies 1st and 2nd teams. The first team, captained by Rachel Palmer, won 5-3 after 3+hours!
MK Winter (2021/2) Medley	
1st team	I am predicting a top flight win this season, after being robbed of an outright win last year through a MK admin error. Closure will finally be ours if we win back what is rightfully ours at the end of the season.
2nd team	Also in the top flight and have a good chance of remaining here come the end of the season.
3rd team	Languishing at the bottom of Div 3. May be a tall order to avoid relegation.

Margaret Gurney ☒
Ladies Captain

Mark Meagrow ☒
Men's Captain