



PATRON: HRH THE EARL OF WESSEX KG KCVO ADC

November 2023 Annual General Meeting

The meeting was held in the Centenary House Meeting Room at The Queen's Club and via Zoom on Wednesday 22nd November at 1800

Attendees: David Norman (President, in the Chair), Fred Satow (Chairman), Chris Davies (CEO & Secretary), Andrew Power (Treasurer), James Acheson-Gray, Judy Angus, Richard Compton-Burnett, Mark Farmiloe, Ben Geytenbeek, Christopher Green, Charles Hue Williams, Peter Jarvis, Andrew Myrtle, Ronald Paterson, Richard Pettit, Rory Sutton, Simon Talbot-Williams, Clive Turner, Chris Vigrass

On-line: Con Bridgeman, Nick Case, Bob Compton, Josh Farrall, Graham Findley, Adam Inselbuch, Norb Madison, Howard McMorris, Lesley Ronaldson, Nicolas Sansbury, Brian Sharp, David Watson, John Whiting

1. Apologies for absence:

Barry Aitken, Howard Angus, Sue Haswell, Alastair Hume, Hugo Johnsen, Alan Lovell, Peter Mallinson, William Maltby, Roger Pilgrim, John Prenn, Angela Probyn, Gareth Quarry, Chris Ronaldson, Dr David Francis Seeling, Doug Sheperdigian, Christopher Snell

Mr DM Norman opened the meeting and thanked all attending the meeting, both in person and via zoom.

2. Notice of the calling of the meeting.

The Notice was issued in September 2023 and promulgated to Members along with the Annual Report, with a second notice in November 2023.

3. The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held via zoom on 23rd November 2022 were approved unanimously. There were no matters arising not covered later in the meeting.

4. Mr FC Satow led on Resolution 1 concerning Mr DM Norman's retirement and subsequent re-election as President for a further three-year term of office. This was enthusiastically agreed by the membership, proposed by Mr C Green and seconded by Mr J Acheson-Gray. The newly re-elected President was warmly and enthusiastically welcomed back into office.

5. The Chairman's Report and to adopt the Annual Report for 2022/23 by the passing of Resolution 2 in the Notice of Annual General Meeting and Mr FC Satow was invited to report.

When I became chairman, some two years ago, I outlined three areas on which the TRA would focus. They were:

- Firstly, continuing and developing the excellent work behind the Tennis Investing in Professionals programme led by David Watson, facilitated by John Whiting and involving many other people, with funding coming from the TRA and the Real Champion's Club,
- Secondly, to develop a similar programme for Rackets, and
- Thirdly, to protect and if possible, develop new Tennis and Rackets courts.

Let me review how we have done in each of these areas over the last year.

Firstly Tennis IIP.

We now have five junior professionals, who have completed their apprenticeships and management training and have obtained jobs as professionals:

- Alex Machin, who trained at Wellington and has now joined Radley
- Jack Josephs, who trained at Middlesex and has now joined RTC
- Nat Cherry, who trained at the Oratory and MCC and has now joined Canford
- Tim Armstrong, who trained at Petworth and has now joined Seacourt
- Jim Ludekens, who trained at Cambridge and is currently helping Oxford, after a spell of travelling.

In addition, we have a further phase of apprentice professionals with:

- Alex Hulme training at MCC.
- Nick Jamieson at Leamington.
- Vaughan Hamilton, who trained at Canford and has now joined Prested Hall.

This is an excellent result, so far, and represents the fruits of hard work by many people over the pandemic and since then. We should thank them all. The focus of the programme is moving, at least for a while, to ensure that existing professionals have all reached level II IIP or above. To some extent this is dependent on individual clubs and their management group encouraging their professionals to do the necessary training and also to employ TennisIIP trained and qualified professionals. The TRA has no control in this area and it is disappointing to see that despite the TRA and RCC investing hundreds of thousands of pounds over the past few years, some clubs continue to employ non-qualified professionals. This is simply a waste of the investment by the TRA and RCC.

Rackets IIP.

After a great deal of effort by Howard Angus and Charlie Foreman in particular, we now have an enthusiastic, young full time Rackets professional at Rugby School and a newly refurbished, relit match court which was funded by the TRA, Old Rugbeians and Rugby School. Charlie Foreman organised a very well attended exhibition match and grand opening on 15 October. The packed gallery was treated to some top Rackets by Ben Cawston, the current world Rackets singles champion, Mike Bailey, who is challenging for the world Rackets doubles championship in Boston with Ben Cawston, James Coyne, a former world Rackets doubles champion and Tom Bomford, another top player. Hopefully, Rackets at Rugby is on the way back up and will move forward and thrive in the future. However, even now a lot remains to be done, with refurbishment and relighting of the second court, with both galleries, the professional's area and changing rooms still to be done. But Rackets at Rugby is in a much better place than it has been for many years.

We have also had some success at Haileybury School, where we now have a young new professional, Luke Sutor, after many months of uncertainty and the possibility that Haileybury School might not support Rackets at all. This has been achieved by the efforts of Deane Pennick, an Old Haileyburian and the TRA.

Elsewhere Marlborough School has managed a smooth transition with Rob Horn from Cheltenham College taking over from Rob Wakely. This has partly been achieved by the strength of the alumni connection. One of the key parts of the TennisIIP programme has been the development of the training manuals for Tennis. Ryan Tully from Wellington and Rob Horne from Marlborough are developing a similar manual for Rackets, which should form the basis of a fully developed Rackets IIP programme in the future.

However, there remains much to do. There are ageing professionals at many schools including Tonbridge, St Paul's, Charterhouse and others. Given the likelihood that the Labour party will win the next election in 2024 and impose VAT on school fees, schools are under budgetary pressures and therefore less likely to support a minority sport like Rackets.

Court development and protection

On that sombre note, let me move on to talk about court development and protection, starting with Rackets. You have already heard about the refurbishment of the match court at Rugby School. At Eton College, a project to refurbish the galleries at the Rackets courts is underway and should be finished next year. Once finished, the courts should be amongst the best facilities in the world, according to one Old Etonian sitting close to me.

In regards to the Tennis courts, the court at Hewell Grange, one of the finest nineteenth century houses in the UK remains the most likely location for a new court in the UK, but to me this appears more likely to be in play in 2025 as there is still a lot to do. The court at Middlesex University, which was given notice to close by the University in 2026, is thriving, but the University itself is struggling with reputational and financial issues, so it is by no means certain that the court will close in 2026.

Board changes

Chris Vigrass has stepped down from the board and as chairman of the Tennis Committee. I thank him very much for many years of hard work and stewardship of Tennis in the UK and wish him the best of luck with his

next project, taking over Prested Hall with others. Ronald Paterson has stepped up to replace him on the Board he plays at Queen's and MCC and is extensively travelled in the Tennis world and a former partner and current consultant at Eversheds Sutherland. Secondly, I welcome Richard Compton-Burnett and James Acheson-Gray to the board. Richard plays tennis at Wellington and through his children, he is involved in Rackets and Tennis, he is an accountant and successful entrepreneur. James has played Rackets and Tennis at a high level and is active in both games himself and through his children.

On that note, I should like to conclude my report and I am happy to take questions.

Mr DK Watson asked about the position of graphite racquets. Mr FC Satow responded by reminding everybody that graphite had been accepted in the US temporarily and the USCTA had amended their Laws for a twelve-month period to evaluate the technology. A long-awaited US report was still not forthcoming. The UK was proceeding cautiously and had set up its own sub-committee with the additional remit to consider the sustainability of the wooden racquet and the viability of manufacturers in the UK.

Mr DK Watson reverted that he had two concerns: One is that the character of both games is really important to all of us and I think none of us would wish technology to have a significant influence on the way the games are played. The second element of the question concerns the fragmentation between the Americans and the rest of the world. Mr FC Satow agreed and added the French had ruled out the use of graphite and the Australians were waiting developments.

Mr B Geytenbeek asked whether NARA had declared a position on graphite. Mr RD Sutton responded that the Rackets world were still evaluating but no decisions had been made. A couple of prototypes had been tried at Queen's but were not sustainable.

Mr S Talbot-Williams asked if a statement could be made on the website as to the current UK position, as he had witnessed a graphite racquet in use in a non-T&RA tournament.

Mr P Jarvis asked whether there was on-going dialogue with Grays and Mr CS Davies confirmed he was in regular dialogue with Richard Gray.

Mr J Acheson-Gray asked about how assessment of participation at schools was measured and whether there were any concerns. Mr RD Sutton stated there was a school ambassador programme which helps to monitor and acknowledged the covid years had created a temporary drop-in play, now in recovery. However, active discussions with the RPA were designed to offset this issue and encourage all professionals to focus on keeping boys and girls playing after they leave school. Mr CS Davies added that overall participation was good, considering both the record entries in the Noel Bruce and the forthcoming National Schools, however acknowledging this wasn't universal across every school and that situation was being closely monitored.

Mr DK Watson asked about the priority given to new facilities as opposed to preserving existing ones and commended the work of Mr S Talbot-Williams and the court development programme. Mr RD Sutton responded to say that in Rackets growth was being achieved by better utilisation of courts, largely in schools, and this had certainly helped more players becoming involved, especially ladies Rackets which was flourishing.

With no further questions, in accordance with Article 32.2.2, the Annual Report of the Company for the 2022/23 season was adopted with alacrity. (Ordinary Resolution 2 in the Notice of Annual General Meeting).

6. To adopt the Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2022 by the passing of Resolution 2 in the Notice of Annual General Meeting. Mr AC Power reported that the finances are in a sound shape, and the T&RA was spending money in line with the priorities of the Chairman laid out in terms of IP, tennis, courts. Essentially, what we try and do each year is break even. And then when we have substantial court developments, we then use some of the capital gains from the investment portfolio to cover those court developments. So last year we more or less broke even, even though we had a £4k loss and that was an improvement from the year before because we didn't have quite so many deficits around tournaments. The T&RA tends to subsidise all tournaments.

Subscriptions are received, which funds staff, marketing activities and any type of development, such as Real Tennis Online. We tend to run a small deficit as these subscriptions don't quite cover the costs of all the administrative and other branding type activities. Membership was essentially flat on 1% growth. Last year subscriptions went up as we had 1% growth in membership and 4% increase in subscriptions. In terms of tournaments, we tend to end up subsidizing most tournaments and run a deficit with tournament expenditure exceeding income last year by £11k, which was down from the year before. The sponsorship of the British Open by Sir John Ritblat and Herminius helped these figures. We're still looking for a long-term sponsor in terms of Tennis, while remaining immensely grateful to Sir John's generosity.

In development, the largest expenditure was on Tennis liP, and spent £75k last year which is a combination of funding from the T&RA and the Real Champions' Club. In addition, we spent £12k on Rackets professional training and we had grants for court development of £20k, which was principally Rugby. The development areas are where we are focusing in terms of our investment priorities. So those sort of deficits in terms of our sort of administrative side, our tournaments and covering the grants are mainly covered by interest and dividends on our portfolio.

Because stock markets improved, the investment portfolio grew. As for the balance sheet, we have investment funds that grew from £2.6 million to £2.7 million at the end of last year, since then the markets continue to do well. Our current balance is about £2.85 million in terms on the balance sheet.

Going forward this year will be similar in terms of where we're investing our money, because the priorities are similar to last year with a bit more emphasis on Rackets training or relatively compared to Tennis. RTO 2.0 should also reach maturity and eye-protection testing will continue. We will also continue to deliver the new streaming capability across both sports, thanks to the T&RA funding and delivery by Mr B Geytenbeek.

Mr J Whiting was concerned about the sums spent on liP. Mr CS Davies explained this was the physical in-year expenditure, and not the budget which is held in the restricted fund.

In accordance with Article 32.2.2, the Trustee's Report and Financial Statements for the twelve months ended 30 June 2023 were adopted unanimously. (Ordinary Resolution 3 in the Notice of Annual General Meeting).

7. In accordance with Article 50.4.1, Haysmacintyre were appointed as registered auditors to carry out an Independent Examination of the Company's accounts for the financial period 1st July 2023 to 30th June 2024. (Ordinary Resolution 4 in the Notice of Annual General Meeting). This was carried unanimously.

8. To announce the retirement of Mr C Vigrass in accordance with Article 23.1 as a Director and the Tennis Committee Chairman, having served in this capacity for six years, by the passing of Resolution 5 in the Notice of Annual General Meeting. Mr DM Norman praised the retiring Trustee for his distinguished service over many years and wished him well for the future. Mr C Vigrass made two points; firstly, he was delighted his successor was a high calibre lawyer, well versed in the game; and secondly wanted to highlight the incredible development of streaming in the last few years.

9. To confirm, in accordance with Articles 20.2 and 21.5, the election of Mr RG Paterson as a Director of the Company and the Tennis Committee Chairman, by the passing of Resolution 6 in the Notice of Annual General Meeting. He was elected unanimously. Mr RG Paterson noted that one of his key challenges was the increased demand to improve the UK sponsorship package, and attract new sponsors into the game.

10. To confirm, in accordance with Articles 20.2 and 21.4, the election of Mr RJ Compton-Burnett and Mr JR Acheson-Gray, as Directors of the Company, by the passing of Resolution 7 in the Notice of Annual General Meeting. They were elected unanimously.

11. To confirm, in accordance with Articles 20.2, 21.5 and 23.2, the re-appointment of Mr RD Sutton, as a Director of the Company, by the passing of Resolution 8 in the Notice of Annual General Meeting. He was elected unanimously. Mr RD Sutton stated that his priorities as Rackets Committee Chairman were to monitor and encourage the level of play as well as keeping a close watch of affordability. He was currently working on a new strategy which he hoped to implement Spring 2024.

12. The Board’s proposed increases to Individual, Associate and Affiliated Club subscription rates in accordance with the schedule (below), by the passing of Resolution 9 in the Notice of Annual General Meeting was carried universally.

Subscription or Affiliate Club Subscriptions		2022/23	Proposed 2023/24	1-year increase
Individual Full Membership Subscription Rates at age of joining				
70 and over		£39.50	£42.00	6.3%
28 – 69		£71.00	£75.00	5.6%
21-27		£41.50	£44.00	6.0%
Under 21 or Full Time Students (under 28)		£16.50	£17.50	6.1%
Associate Membership Subscription Rates				
All ages		£31.50	£33.50	6.3%
Affiliate subscriptions				
Clubs/Schools/Universities with their own courts	Fee for School or University to cover all full time students	£172.00	£182.00	5.8%
Nomadic/ Evening clubs (without any court facilities)	Fee for Club to cover all members	£86.00	£91.00	5.8%

13. Mr S Talbot-Williams asked whether there were any statistics on the number of Over 70s who opted to pay the higher rate (as suggested at the last AGM). Mr CS Davies stated of the 596 members who are over 70, 34 were benefactors and three had opted to pay the higher rate. Overall, that made 37 out of 596. Mr S Talbot-Williams suggested the Over 70 concessionary rate be scrapped.

14. Mr DM Norman then invited Mr S Talbot-Williams to report on recent court development progress. He responded to say that progress was good at Hewell Grange and he was in regular contact with the buyers. They were very commercially minded but very keen to see the Tennis court back in use and were keen to work with the T&RA and were particularly keen to grant open access to the facility. He had also recently met up with the Repton Headmaster, who had overcome a number of issues at the school but now very keen to move forward. Finally, many of the old guard at Middlesex University had moved on and the more recent replacements were more amenable to discussion. The university wasn’t faring well and hadn’t really established what to do with the court in 2026, and a forecast of £2 million to demolish the court was prohibitive. There had been good support from many within the community, including Sir John Ritblat, Peter Luck-Hille and Carl Snitcher. Mr S Talbot-Williams also thought too many were stuck in the past, which Mr CS Davies considered unfortunate as the T&RA rebranding was forward looking “a future built on history”. Mr DK Watson concluded that the T&RA need to continue to prioritise the growth of the game. If you look at the US and Australia and to a lesser extent, France, the game has grown by the introduction new courts and a significant driver or the participation was new facilities and we need to protect those that we have but that we need to ensure the association continues to grow for the future health of both games.

15. Mr DM Norman drew the meeting to a close and noted that the T&RA was an institution that depends hugely on voluntary help. He concluded that we were making positive progress, but we've also got some pretty significant challenges in front of us.

With no further business the meeting closed at 19.07.