

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR WATERLOOVILLE BOWLING CLUB AGM 2021**

Oh what a difficult year! When we sat at the AGM last year we did not anticipate what was to come. COVID has dominated the year for everyone and severely curtailed our opportunities to play bowls.

The first lockdown in March shut us down completely and the whole competitive season was cancelled. As we prepared to re-open under tight COVID restrictions the unusually hot spring weather played havoc with the carpet which became ridged and required stretching. Unfortunately Dales had their staff on furlough which delayed the availability of a team to carry out the work, which they eventually did on the hottest day of the year. But at last we could bowl in pairs or singles on alternate rinks, to maintain social distancing and using sanitizing materials regularly. Gradually over the summer restrictions were eased to allow triples and the return of roll-up sessions with pre-booking. It was good to see so many members taking the opportunity to play.

The disruption to the bowls season did present an opportunity to bring forward the start of the build of the new extension. All the grant funding was in place, we had selected the builder and he was available to start in July so the decision was taken to go ahead. Over the next four months we saw the new building materialise, not without a few difficulties, as we were required to dig deeper footings into the clay, fit a steel beam in the roof, change the angle of the stairs and fit a fire door in the stairwell. These were stipulated by Building Control and did increase costs. These were offset by bringing the painting and decorating in house and a small team of Mike Freeman, Derek Holt and I were able to start priming walls and woodwork while the builder was onsite and handed over spaces to us. The builder completed work at the end of November. We have progressed the decoration and fitting out of the building through December and then on through the lockdown to the point that we are now almost complete! We look forward to being able to show it to you as soon as the lockdown restrictions are lifted and we are able to open the club again for play.

A special thank you goes to Mike Freeman who has coordinated all the work as Project Manager. He has liaised with the builder and architect, sourced materials and fittings and done a considerable amount of voluntary work which has helped bring his original plan to fruition. My thanks also go to Derek and Jackie, as the other members of the building sub-committee, who have contributed significantly to the success of the project.

Thanks also go to Len Richards (Treasurer) and Derek Holt (Secretary) who in their respective roles identified opportunities to apply for government grants issued by the local authority to offset our loss of income. An initial COVID grant of £10K paid for all the measures we had to put in place to allow us to operate under the restrictions and has compensated for our loss of income from bridge, teas etc. Further grant aid has been received during the second lockdown. Len stood down as Treasurer in October and Jackie Buckley took over as Acting Treasurer. Our thanks go to Len for all his hard work on behalf of the club, during a very difficult period.

We recognise that the restrictions imposed during the pandemic have curtailed opportunities for you the members to play bowls. The club values your support and loyalty and to this end the committee have decided to give a refund on your 2020 subscription of £30. This will be paid to all full annual members in 2020, whether you decide to rejoin or not. It is important, however, that we do encourage as many members as possible to rejoin, in order to sustain a healthy club. All full members in 2020 are being offered a 20% discount on the subscription for 2021. With the refund this brings the subscription down from £100 to £50. A 50% saving! To receive the discount we do ask that you rejoin as early as possible in March and no later than 30 April, when the discount will cease. Winter members are being offered a full refund of £45 as they have had little opportunity to play. All these details are on the subscription form sent with these documents in lieu of the AGM.

Another thank you to Jackie for producing the COVID Times newsletter during the lockdown periods. We hope you have found this useful in keeping you in touch with the activities of the club and with

other members. Thank you to all those members who contributed articles to make the document fun and interesting.

Sadly a small number of members and spouses have passed on this year and our thoughts and sincere condolences go to their families and friends.

We hope that we will be able to return to the green sometime in March and all our efforts are being concentrated on having the green and clubhouse ready for you when we return. We are planning for a full competitive season with club competitions and possibly league fixtures but all will depend on the rate at which the government lifts restrictions.

We also hope that all those who are eligible have had their COVID Vaccine jab and that you are all staying safe. To those who have been ill with COVID we wish you well and a speedy recovery.

We live in uncertain times but hopefully things are looking brighter! Thank you for your support, stay well and **STAY SAFE.**

*Paul Buckley*

President

Waterlooville Bowling Club