

Tonbridge Sports Association

Annual Report 2015/2016

Last year's report recorded how the Sports Association commenced and this year it is noted why, in this last twelve months, Club's have such an ability to continue their sporting activities.

Each year, in the Annual Reports, we report how successful our member clubs have been. For the clubs this has been a continuance of many years hard work for a considerable number of volunteers. We see children, who started their sporting interest participating in playing, move on to promote their own children to take up the sport and they themselves remain attached to the club to organise and administer. We have a number of clubs where membership commences later in life and there, once again, these clubs have members who give that extra time to ensure the clubs progress into the future. Our member clubs offer a considerable social element into the community.

There was a gradual increase in organised sports participation over the years. One by one small clubs developed from the sports and social sections of local businesses. The population of Tonbridge, and its surrounding areas, increased in the 1960's, and this brought about an increasing need for leisure and sporting opportunities. With the District Council very much aware of the need and with the Sports Association's expanding membership prompting many discussions we moved into the 10 years of the 1970's with the prospect of a great deal of sporting activity.

However the beginning of the 1970's began, and indeed ended, with a certain amount of conflict between the District Council and the Sports Association. In 1971 the District Council brought forward a plan to introduce a charge for parking in the Lower Castle Fields car park which services the Racecourse Sportsground. The charge was to be at the rate of 5 pence per day but was for all seven days of the week. This, therefore, had an impact on the many sports clubs, and those playing cricket, hockey, football and rugby. The Sports Association raised considerable objection to this and was successful in that the plan was abandoned, at that time.

The year 1972 saw the opening of facilities at Hayesden for sailing and angling which were to be administered by the Sports Association. Both sports continue to enjoy the facilities that have been created. At the beginning of 1973 we saw the completion of the replacement changing facilities at Woodland Walk, our smallest of what is now four sportsgrounds. Although only two football pitches, they were used every weekend on Saturdays and Sundays. In 2015/2016 we have had continuing discussions on the dilapidated conditions of the facilities and how the problem may not be solved. Although the adult football clubs annually spend their limited funds in dealing with the fittings inside there are concerns for the structure, particularly the roof. It would be quite disappointing to see sport not being played at the sportsground.

In 1973 Swanmead Sportsground was the home of Tonbridge Athletics Club. It is recorded in the Sports Association Annual Reports of the time, that the Athletics Club had been in receipt of trophies and awards recognising their successes. It is possible to repeat all the words written as the same congratulations apply to 2015/2016. The club's home is currently at Tonbridge School and the officers of TMBC have spent some considerable hours, this year, in working towards a new Community Use Agreement which would give security for the use of the track by the club with enhanced facilities. The proposed enhancements would provide the club with outstanding facilities.

Although the Athletics Club was at Swanmead Sportsground, 1974 saw the creation of a cricket square. This was the foundation of establishing Cowdrey Cricket Club which today is our foremost promoter of junior cricket organising weekly coaching and allowing the juniors access to playing against other clubs. Senior members of the club greatly assist the sports development programme run by TMBC. In 1974 Swanmead also had planning submitted for an extension to its building to house Tonbridge Judo Club. With the facilities as its hub this club has also gone from strength to strength and in 2015/2016 has been successful in both national and international events.

1974 was indeed a busy year which saw the completion of an 18 hole golf course at Poulton Wood and the formation of a Golf club. The latter part of the year saw a number of meetings discussing the future need for indoor facilities. Like discussions today we are always looking to the future as any plans take time to materialise. There was a need for multipurpose indoor sports facilities to cope with sports requiring all year round training facilities and the emergence of the popularity of other indoor sports.

Towards the end of the 1970's came the second controversial issue. The proposal was to redevelop the land occupied by Tonbridge Angels Football Club. The Sports Association voiced many objections to the football club being resited onto the Racecourse Sportsground. Although it was made very clear that the redevelopment proceeds would be used for new sporting facilities the objections were strong enough for other plans to be made. Those plans were the purchase of 49 acres at Tonbridge Farm thereby doubling the available space for Tonbridge clubs to use. Out of the redevelopment came the needed indoor facilities. In recognition of the Chairman of the Sports Association, whose input to sport in the town spanned more than 50 years, the Angel Centre has the Jim May Sports Hall, home to the town's successful Badminton club.

The Annual Reports of the Sports Association have, for a number of years, recorded the successes of its member clubs and this report has recorded how some foundations were laid during a productive decade. We cannot leave out of this report specific mention of the Tonbridge Baseball Club who were the 2015 champions of the British Baseball Federation Single-A Division and Tonbridge Invicta Football Club who won the Tonbridge & District League 2016 Premier Division title.

The 1970's commenced out of the recovery from flooding to the town and in 2015/2016 the subject of flooding continues to be on the agenda of the effective Liaison meetings between the Sports Association and the officers of TMBC. As we move forward a year we hope an answer can be found to the difficulties faced by Tonbridge Juddians Rugby Club.

Tonbridge is very much a centre of sporting activity and indeed The Active People Survey carried out by Sport England in 2015 ranked Tonbridge & Malling top in Kent and 17th nationally. The considerable number of hours of work by past volunteers has provided future generations with many sporting opportunities.

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