

**Annual report 2018/2019**

This report reflects on sporting activities in Tonbridge, as we move towards our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020. The Association, which commenced on May 19<sup>th</sup> 1920, was formed to manage a small area of land known locally as the Racecourse, an area next to Tonbridge Castle and surprisingly close to the main thoroughfare of the town.

Some little activity commenced and with the addition of further land through 1921 and 1922, a formal opening, as a Sportsground, took place in June 1923. In the subsequent years a number of sports and social sections of local businesses asked for annual use for both winter and summer sports. The Tonbridge Sports Association continued to administer all sporting activity on Council land and having representatives on the Parks Committee of Tonbridge Urban District Council.

In 1987, with the number of Sportsgrounds and facilities having been considerably enlarged, the administration needed to revert to Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council with the Sports Association working in partnership with Leisure Services. The facilities are now four Sportsgrounds, a Country Park, a golf course, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, a Leisure Centre and a partnership arrangement with Tonbridge School. All this a fitting achievement for the previous officers and committees who gave many hours representing the Tonbridge Sports Association and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council for pursuing such recreational policies.

Again, this year, there has been enhancement of facilities. In this last year we have seen the construction of a new Baseball facility on Deaconsfield. This was achieved through funding from the Baseball Club, the Rugby Club and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. The Rugby Club has commenced partnership use with The Judd School. The construction of new cricket practice nets, at Swanmead, is now in the final stages, being fully funded by Cowdrey Cricket Club. Junior football use commenced at Frogbridge. The Athletics facilities, at Tonbridge School, have been considerably enhanced with the resurfacing of the track and new lighting at a cost of over £400,000. This was achieved through funding from the Athletic Club, the School and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council through a new Community Use Agreement, following an existing Community Use Agreement for the All Weather facility, extensively used by junior football clubs.

The aspect of community use is the thread through all the sporting activities in Tonbridge and surrounding areas. In many clubs the members enjoy the playing of the sport combined with enjoying the social activities. There is a considerable age range in the membership of the clubs, and club committees organise social activities which for some provide all year round involvement. This can be seen at Tonbridge Bowling Club, an outdoor bowls activity, which then has short mat indoor activity from October to April.

Under the umbrella of community activities sport has always played a large part. The number of those participating in some sports activity may have changed, from those old days, but there are still thousands who are members of the clubs and enjoy their sport and social activities every week of the year. We still have football and rugby being enjoyed by hundreds of children on Saturday and Sunday mornings and hundreds of children in our Swimming Club through the week, but our membership, and the community, encompasses many other activities. As members of the Sports Association we continue to have West Kent Radio Car Club, Tonbridge Archery Club, Tonbridge Radio Flyers, Tonbridge Tennis Club, Tonbridge Judo Club, Poult Wood Squash Club and Tiger Gymnastics.

Tonbridge is surrounded by water, unfortunately partly to the detriment of the Rugby Club, who is still enduring flooding on Deaconsfield. However the water is enjoyed by Tonbridge Sailing Club, Tonbridge Canoe Club and the Tonbridge Angling Club which is one of the largest clubs in the South of England and fishes on seven lakes and fourteen miles of river. The success of the Tonbridge Parkrun should be recorded with participants of over 700 on some Saturday mornings at the Racecourse Sportsground. This has given enthusiasm to the Junior Parkrun, which is held at Tonbridge Farm Sportsground on a Sunday morning with numbers now approaching 80.

The Racecourse Sportsground Management Plan is being finalised, which is planning for the future management. All the facilities require a level of administration which is organised every day of the year. From the grounds contractors to Leisure Services there is constant input required. The Sports Association is involved through continuous contact and through the six weekly Liaison meetings with Officers of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. These Liaison meetings cover a large number of issues and are very effective combining the maintenance of the facilities and sports and facilities development for our community.

There is always pressure on the facilities be it weather related or sometimes not enough weeks in the sporting calendar. In some areas there is overlapping use between winter and summer sports and there has to be respect of both. Reaction to dealing with issues may not be fast enough for some however it is good to see that all issues get resolved satisfactory by the continuous monitoring through the Liaison meetings. The Sports Association, as ever, appreciates the time that Leisure Services officers give to the clubs and through this report that is recorded.

As mentioned at the commencement of this report the Sports Association reaches its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in May next year continuing to work in partnership with the Council in striving to maintain and improve the provision of sports facilities and sports activities in the community.

April 2019