

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT 2003-04

Following the agreement at last year's AGM for the RFA to become incorporated, much of the year has been taken up with administration issues. The Association was duly incorporated on the 18th July 2003 as a Company Limited by Guarantee, and all members were subsequently requested to sign a Letter of Guarantee to confirm their membership of the new Company. So far, 352 forms (approximately 64%) have been returned.

The need for policy statements covering a range of issues became a requirement and we now have statements covering Risk Assessment, Child Protection, Equal Opportunities, Disability and Racial Discrimination.

We have also now produced new and improved court specifications.

Finally, incorporation led us to review our banking arrangements as we now became liable for bank charges and we have consolidated the majority of our banking at HSBC where we will have free banking for at least another 12 months. Members have been requested to sign new standing order mandates and to date approximately 53% have been returned.

On the marketing front, members will have noticed our new corporate image and the new mid-season review which received positive feedback. The glossy Handbook continues to be highly popular and we have commenced work on updating the Record Book which should be circulated later in the summer. A Steering Group has also been set up to review our website and we await their recommendations in the next few months. Thanks to the efforts of David Barnes, we have enjoyed a good level of success with *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph* in respect of the printing of championship results.

In terms of development, we have started work on outlining a strategic plan for the next five years and we will keep members informed as our thoughts progress. We continue to have a

constructive dialogue with the Eton Fives Association through the Fives Forum and the recent joint initiative to set up facilities for a London Universities Fives Club is but one example of the close cooperation that exists between the two organisations.

As regards equipment, we continue to be happy with the quality of balls produced by Nigel Gordon and by Cliffs and we are also fortunate with the continuing range of gloves that is currently available.

We are delighted that, through the Charitable Trust, assistance could be provided to both Denstone School and Derby Moor to enable their courts to be renovated, and we are hopeful that the two disused courts at Clifton College will soon become available again. Work will continue in trying to provide appropriate assistance to schools to restore the game of Fives where it is no longer played.

Looking at our championships, a new Old Boys' competition was introduced this year as part of our desire to increase links between schools and Old Boys' Clubs so that school leavers will have a ready outlet to continue playing Fives. We named the competition 'The Owers Trophy' in honour of Tony Owers, an Old Whitgiftian and one of the Association's principal benefactors.

Our other competitions attracted higher entries overall and we are encouraged by the quality and depth that currently exists at all age levels, both in the adult and school games. James Toop became the youngest winner of the National Singles since Wayne Enstone and achieved the feat of being the first player since K.C. Gandar Dower in 1932 to be a National champion at both Eton and Rugby Fives. The Board would like to thank all organisers for their tremendous work in making these events so successful.

It is our view that the state of the game is as healthy now, if not healthier, than it has been in the past.

Ian Fuller, May 2004