



LTA President, David Rawlinson Visits Kent

In March the LTA President David Rawlinson, and his wife Brenda, visited Kent and were blessed with glorious sunshine, getting the warmest of welcomes throughout the county! David certainly did his bit to “Play Your Way” around a county intent on getting him to “Eat His Way” around!

During the Saturday he played with novice adults at St John’s Tennis club in Tunbridge Wells, a club celebrating its centenary in 2022. During lockdown they had converted a bowls green into 2 new grass courts in an innovative project that also supported the mental health of members.

David next joined a club session at Maidstone LTC and saw their impressive new clubhouse. After watching and meeting an amazing female coach at Kings Hill Community Club David next enjoyed 2 highly competitive sets of county-level men’s doubles at the amazing tennis centre at Avenue Tennis in Gillingham.

On Sunday David joined in the mobility drills with complete beginners at Swanley Community Tennis. After that was on the receiving end of a ruthless game of mini-orange with the delightful Zofia. Despite being just 8 years old she took great delight in running our President from corner to corner, making him chase balls for the entire session. Her infectious smile and love of the game provided a memory to treasure. David later joined in the coaching session for youngsters with learning disabilities at Bromley Tennis Centre – they were equally enthusiastic, fiercely competitive, and apparently never miss a session; they just love the sport. It was a fantastic illustration of what Open Door funding can deliver.

Finally, David and Brenda for the first time ever – enjoyed games of Padel at the impressive Sundridge Park Club in Bromley.

The visit showcased some great activity – in large and small clubs, in parks and community venues, in a CITC and also a privately-funded high-class tennis centre. David saw everything from Padel tennis to LTA Youth, disability sessions, county training and county seniors tournaments. He met a small army of willing volunteers who innovated through the lockdowns to keep tennis thriving across the entire tennis landscape.

David was particularly excited to see what has been achieved at Swanley Community Tennis where he was greeted by the Mayor and consort, town councillors plus coaches and local families. Following a titanic struggle lasting almost a decade, changes at the local council and the availability of the LTA gate access scheme combined to deliver this project. In February 2021 this community facility opened -with 6 floodlit courts, gate access and, for the first time, nets that don’t have to be propped up with glass bottles! This is a much-needed boost to a community that has lost much of its sporting infrastructure. As one councillor so succinctly commented “this is what can be done when people start saying yes rather than no”