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# Stopsley Working Men's Club

Founded in 1946, Stopsley Working Men's Club in Luton has been at the heart of its local community ever since with a wide range of activities keeping its members entertained

Stopsley Working Men's Club in Luton, Bedfordshire was founded back in 1946 in a basic wooden hut but has expanded over the intervening years to become an impressive modern club with excellent all-round facilities.

The club consists of three large rooms, all with their own bar, including the main Members Lounge, complete with three pool tables and two dartboards.

But, of course, a club is more than bricks and mortar, and what also makes Stopsley WMC stand out as a venue is its friendly and family-orientated ethos which has ensured that a



Regular live entertainment is enjoyed by members



steady stream of new people continue to discover a new home-from-home at the club.

“We really want to be a club which has something for everyone,” says Club Secretary Pauline Hailey. “The club is very much part of the local community and we aim to provide a safe, welcoming environment to people of all ages, from young families to seniors, and provide a place where everyone can get together and enjoy themselves.

“The members are the most important people at the club and the Committee Members and staff all work really hard together to ensure that the members can come in here, relax and have a good time.”

For a perfect illustration of this ethos, the club enjoyed a bumper period during the recent UEFA European Championship as members flocked to the club in huge numbers to witness England’s march to the Final.

“The Euros were great for us,” says Pauline. “We really made the most of

the tournament and decorated the club with St George’s flags and put all the fixture lists up on the wall and advertised them on our website and on Facebook.

“We also did a free barbecue a couple of hours before the kick-offs of the England games and that was really successful in encouraging members to come and watch the games here on our big screen.

“We didn’t do any drinks promotions to tie in with the Euros because our prices are extremely reasonable anyway and we did really good business throughout the tournament, even if England couldn’t quite lift the trophy.”

But, of course, the domestic football season is about to get underway and the club will be showing plenty of live football on Sky Sports and TNT Sports.

As you’d expect given its location, the club has a significant number of Luton Town fans amongst its members and Hatters games invariably draw a crowd to the club..

“We do really well out of showing live sport and it was great to have Luton Town in the Premier League last season,” says Pauline. “Obviously, they’ve now been relegated to the Championship after a disappointing campaign in the top flight but we are still expecting plenty of fans to come in and watch their live fixtures.

“They have a big following around here but their ground only holds about 12,000 so that is a great opportunity for us as people who can’t get into the stadium may still want to watch the game with fellow fans. We make sure that we advertise the Luton Town fixtures to our members well in advance.

“But the live Premier League games will also be popular and we will also show other sport such as rugby, the Olympic Games and horse racing - we even showed the All-Ireland Hurling Final in July which brought in quite a few people.

“The beauty of our set-up is that we have a big screen down one end and you can have a load of members en-



The club boasts impressive sporting facilities, including three pool tables



The club has three large rooms each with its own bar

joying the football there, and then, on the other side of the room there are people with no interest in sport listening to music on the jukebox and chatting with their friends.”

Playing Sport is just as much a part of the club’s appeal as watching it, with the club boasting first-class facilities – including three pool tables and two dartboards – and a proud record in national and local competitions, as is obvious from the club’s packed trophy cabinet.

“We have four pool teams, two darts teams and two dominoes teams,” says Pauline. “We have actually invested in a third pool table quite recently as the sport is so popular among our members.

“And with a lot of clubs and pubs shutting down in and around our area, we’ve inherited some sports teams who have lost their original venue and are now members here.

“We’ve got two guys on our committee that play pool to a good level and they’re really passionate about the sport so we ensure that the tables

are always in excellent condition. We host the District League Finals here so that’s a testament to our facilities.

“Darts-wise, we host a lot of darts competition including the Men’s and Ladie’s Super League events. We have two permanent dartboards but also have the space in our club to put in mobile dartboards when required

“And when there’s a finals night or presentation, we put entertainment and food on, perhaps sandwiches or a curry, and we offer that out to everyone in the club meaning that all the members are involved, not just the ones there for the sports event.

“It creates a great atmosphere, the members are happy and it brings new people in who will often want to become members after visiting us for the first time.”

The club has also teamed up with a local youth team, a move which has greatly strengthened membership numbers.

“The sponsorship deal with the youth section of Stopsley Sharks FC has been really good,” says Pauline.

“Part of the deal is that the at least one parent has to become a member of the club – the football club charges them a pound a month and that covers their membership at our club.

“We have gained around 600 members from the football and they can come in as a family.

“The football club can use our Hall for their presentations and also for fundraisers and, of course, that gives us the added benefit of increased takings over the bar.

“We are also the home base of the Stopsley Striders which is a running/walking club for all abilities and they hold a meeting here every month.”

Another key attraction for members is the club’s wide range of drinks at each of the three bars.

“We have a really good selection of draught beers, including Heineken, Heineken, Coors, Cruzcampo and Moretti and we have a great relationship with our brewery so often get support from them when we have a charity fundraiser or a special





The club pulled out all the stops for the recent UEFA European Championship and live Premier League and Championship football is popular throughout the year

club event,” says Pauline.

“We try and keep our prices down and we’re certainly excellent value when compared to other venues in our area.

“We’re a members club so we really listen to our members and act on their suggestions. We will always give things a try. If it works, we keep it and if it doesn’t, we try something else!

“The club is very involved in the community and we have all sorts of groups meeting here, as well as private functions, including Diwali celebrations.

“We have a Club Licence and a Personal Licence to enable us to host more private functions,” explains Pauline. “The income we receive from private events is important as this is a big building that needs an awful lot of maintenance.”

Meanwhile, on July 4 this year the club welcomed many hundreds of new people through its door as an official polling station in the Luton North Constituency.

“That helps to raise the profile of the club as people could have moved into the area and perhaps won’t know we are here, despite the fact we have a large sign outside the club,” says Pauline.

“Since the General Election, there has been a notable influx of new people enquiring about membership having come here for the first time in order to vote and seen that it’s a nice club with plenty going on.”

Live entertainment remains very popular at the club with Entertainment Secretary Liam Leaning bringing some top acts to the club on a regular basis.

“Liam is very good at getting a really mix of performers over the year, including solo singers and bands play-

ing music of different genres and eras,” says Pauline.

“We also have race nights a couple of times a year and organise big parties around the major celebratory days such as New Year’s Eve where we really pull out all the stops and make the room look fantastic.

“We also had a great St Patrick’s Day party in March which attracted over 150 people,” says Pauline.

“Liam has an Irish background and he organised for a local Irish dancing school to come and give a display and it was a fantastic night with lots of members really getting into the spirit of things and dressing up.

“We’re really happy with how the club is going at the moment and we want to continue listening to our members and giving them a fantastic experience whenever they are here!”

#### CONTACT DETAILS

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