

**History of Cranston
Park Tennis &
Social Club**

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Finally to Cranston Park Lawn Tennis and Social Club for the loan of committee meeting and AGM minutes from its inaugural meeting in 1932 through to present day.

Author's Preface

My interest in researching the history of the Club began in 1999. The Secretary at the time was looking for somewhere to store meeting minutes and various other items of correspondence from the early 1980s.

I started the time consuming task of reading through these minutes and making notes of relevant facts.

The project just got bigger when I searched out the meeting minutes back to 1932 and ended up with the complete set.

The original intention was to compile enough information to produce a small book for the 70th anniversary of the Club in 2002, but this target soon passed. I had completely underestimated the amount of information, the number of photographs and press cuttings available.

After many revisions and another four years, I saw the light at the end of the tunnel and decided to publish what I had compiled onto the World Wide Web, while I continue my research. This initial release would allow more flexibility for revisions and additions. The production of a booklet may depend on cost effectiveness as its interested audience may only be a small minority of existing and previous Club members.

Introduction

Development of Cranston Park Estate

1878 - 1890

Gaynes Manor occupied much of southern Upminster around the Corbets Tey Road area and totalled around 810 acres, making it by far the largest Manor in Upminster, but over the years parts of the estate were sold.

In 1878 the area that had become the Gaynes Park Estate was sold to its former occupier, Henry Joslin. By 1887 Joslin had added the whole 98 acres of Hoppy Hall Farm to the estate and in 1890 he bought Hunts Farm consisting of 130 acres.

1927 - 1928

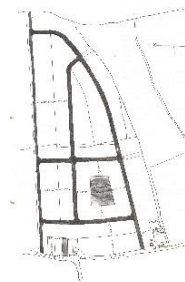
Following Joslin's death in 1927 the whole estate was broken up and sold for building land, the estate had been reduced to only 400 acres by the time of the sale. The 1928 sale broke these remaining 400 acres into 17 lots, some of which were very small, being just properties without farm land. The accompanying farm land was sold off as parcels of building land of up to 80 acres.

One parcel of building land off Corbets Tey Road was half of Hunts Farm, some 68 acres, extending from where Springfield Gardens is now to Park Drive. The second half of Hunts Farm was 81 acres, starting at Park Drive and extending to Cranston Park Avenue. This became known as Cranston Park Estate, the land acquired for development by Mr Alfred E Palmer of Billericay.

1932 - 1939

Building work started at the southern boundary where Cranston Park Avenue began to take shape in 1932, while Melstock Avenue progressed from newly established Park Drive to join it. Brackendale Gardens also worked its way from Park Drive in 1933, along with Coniston Avenue, both being completed by 1936, by which time Cranston Park Avenue was near completion. Gaynes Senior School in Brackendale Gardens started being built in July 1936. The far eastern end of Park Drive remained unfinished when war began in 1939.

A parcel of land, designated as reserved space, was set aside within the boundaries of Coniston Avenue, Brackendale Gardens, Park Drive and Melstock Avenue. This land formed the foundation of Cranston Park Tennis and Social Club.



Copy of a page from the document "Abstract of the Title of A E Palmer to freehold land at Upminster"

1932 - 1933

The Early Years

1932

On the evening of Friday 5th August 1932 a meeting was held at the Bell Hotel, which was situated at what is now known as 'Bell Corner', to inaugurate a Tennis and Social Club on the Cranston Park Estate. The landowner, Mr A. E. Palmer, chaired the meeting where he proposed to lay two hard courts of the non maintenance variety. Mr Palmer put before the meeting the cost of the courts and pavilion etc. and it was decided that the annual rental payable should be £25 per annum per court with the proviso that should the membership fall short of fifty, the rental should comprise £1 per member.

It was proposed and carried that the Club be called 'The Cranston Park Tennis and Social Club' and a temporary committee was formed from those present to act until the general meeting was held later in the year. The committee comprised of Chairman - Mr A E Palmer, Secretary - Mr A W Jerry, Treasurer - Mr A A Bate, also Mr Tarlton, Mrs I Needs, Mrs C E Smith and Mr Parsons (Jr). Three other people were also nominated but after being put to the vote, were not elected. It was also proposed that Mr Palmer be asked to accept the position of President at the general meeting to be held at a later date, in view of his generosity towards the Club. Mr Walls, the manager of the Bell Hotel, had loaned the room for the purpose of the meeting, free of charge, he also offered to let the Club have free use of the room for any further functions. It was decided that any further business should be left until the general meeting.



1932 Minute book

The early committee meetings were held in the estate office. At the first meeting on 12th September, Mr Palmer informed the committee that he had already agreed a contract with Gazes, the well known tennis court manufacturers, for the laying of two hard courts. The social pursuits of the Club moved swiftly with four social dances taking place at the Bell Hotel on Thursday or Friday evenings in October, November, January and March. Tickets for the first three dances were sold at 2s 6d each and those in March, on St. Patrick's Day, at 3s 6d each.

As the Club did not possess any funds, Mr Palmer donated a cheque for the sum of £4 13s 0d which represented his membership fee together with his wife's subscription in order that the Club would have sufficient funds in hand to meet sundry expenses. It was agreed that a bank account be held at the Upminster branch of Barclays Bank and that the treasurer hold a petty cash balance of £1. Rules

drafted by the Hon. Secretary, were submitted to the meeting, with the colours of the Club being agreed as black and amber, thereby making club rule No.1. Subscriptions were agreed as 2s 6d entrance fee and £1 5s 0d annual for residents on the estate, 7s 6d entrance fee and £1 15s 0d annual for non-residents, 2s 6d entrance fee and 12s 6d annual for children, from 12 to 16 years and 10s 6d per annum for non-playing members.

To start with committee meetings were frequent, eventually being held at about monthly intervals. At the dance held at the Bell Hotel in October around 90 tickets had been taken up. The charge for the band was £2 10s 0d and refreshments charged at 10d per head, an MC, Mr H V Cox, officiated and arranged the dance programme. Following this dance, letters were received from the 'Orpheus' and 'The Waltonians' dance bands offering their services for future dances. The first dance made a profit of £4 12s 10d.

Although the club rules at this time were still in draft form and still being discussed, they were strictly adhered to. One case being Mr H V Cox (the October dance MC) of Hilbery Chaplin & Co. who had written to the committee asking to be considered for resident membership in view of his association with the estate, after consideration his request was rejected.

In November subscriptions had been received from 29 playing members, one non-playing member and in addition three entrance fees. The bank balance stood at £46 5s 10d and the petty cash balance was £1 0s 3½d. Although tennis courts were not yet available, three dozen tennis balls were purchased, at a cost of £2 0s 6d. Advertising and printing costs totalled £1 5s 6d. It was also agreed that before being settled, all tradesmen's accounts should be submitted to the committee for approval.

The two courts were opened on Saturday 5th November, in view of the time of year it was an informal affair. The pavilion was already functioning and heated by a coal fire, with coal purchased at a cost of £1 6s 6d, so the club was fully operational and the first of many whist drives was held making a profit of over £2.

Club bye-laws were decided upon. With regard to visitors, they would be allowed to use the courts from Monday to Friday at a charge of 1shilling per day and Saturdays, Sundays and Bank holidays at 2shillings per day. Regarding clothing, men had to wear long white flannels during the summer months (April to September), although grey flannels were allowed during the winter months (October to March). It was decided that three committees should act for the ensuing year, being General, Entertainment and Ground.

The first Annual General Meeting was held in the pavilion on Thursday 15th December where Mr Palmer was duly elected as President. The draft rules were considered at the meeting and following some minor amendments were duly adopted. The temporary committee stood down from their positions but were all re-elected to serve in the same capacity for the ensuing year with vacancies also being filled. The structure of the committees had been completed and consisted of the following:-

General Committee:

Hon. Secretary Mr A W Jerray Hon. Asst. Secretary Mr E R Green

Hon. Treasurer Mr A A Bate

Captain Mr J P Mansell Vice Captain Mr A Rucker

Members Mr Tarlton, Mr Parsons (Jr), Mrs I Needs, Mrs C E Smith

Entertainment Committee:

Social Secretary Mr H R Padgham

Members Mrs Parsons, Mrs Padgham, Mrs Mansell, Mrs Bate, Mrs Jerray, Mrs Needs, Miss Arthurs, Mr G Smith, Mr Buckley (Jr)

Ground Committee:

Members Mr Pleasance, Mr G G Smith, Mr B Buckley, Mr H Buckley

A ball fund was started because it was found impossible to provide balls from the present annual subscriptions. It was suggested that either members provide their own balls or a contribution system be adopted. The latter was agreed and playing members had to contribute 5shillings per annum on 1st January or in two instalments of 2s 6d, on 1st January and 1st July.

1933

At the start of the year the bank balance had risen to £60 18s 11d and the membership stood at 48. The dance held in February at the Bell Hotel was a great success, making a profit of £4 1s 1d. The Social Secretary outlined the social programme for the early months with a combination of whist drives and dances. With a view of keeping the General Committee informed regarding social activities, the Social Secretary was co-opted onto the General Committee.

Very soon the number of applications had exceeded the original number of 50 that had been planned for the two courts that were available, but as Mr Palmer had generously agreed to have a further two courts laid; it was decided to accept further applications. Meanwhile the social functions were well attended and made profits.

The rateable value of £25 per annum per court was questioned and an appeal was submitted on behalf of the Club. In March the tenancy agreement between the Club and Mr Palmer was accepted with the terms being for three years with the option of renewing, under the same conditions, for a further period of three years. It was therefore agreed, subject to the completion of the agreement, that the sum of £58 6s 4d be paid to Mr Palmer, being rent of the two courts to 31st December 1933 (£50) together with sundry expenses.

The question of registration as a Club was considered but it was decided to only apply for a licence for the sale of tobacco and cigarettes in the pavilion, the Customs & Excise Licence cost 5s 3d. A suitable display case was obtained for chocolates and cigarettes. A table tennis table was purchased at a cost of £6 17s 9d and 12 deck chairs were obtained from Roomes Stores at a cost of £1 13s 0d. Further items for the pavilion were agreed, such as a clock, a suggestion and complaints box, a dustbin and a fire guard, additionally a gramophone together with a number of records was donated. Two umpire chairs were purchased at the cost of £1 14s 6d each.

There were some defects pointed out in the two courts to which Gazes agreed to remedy. There was also some concern regarding the use of the pavilion by children and the possibility of leading to complications. Therefore a notice to the following effect was put up:

Children of Members

Will members please note that children will be permitted in the pavilion only if in the care of a member who will be responsible for their conduct.

By order of the Committee

The necessary steps were taken to apply for affiliation to the Essex Lawn Tennis Association, for which the fee was £1 10s 0d. The Club Captain was given control of the summer tournament for which Mr Palmer presented challenge cups for the ladies and gents singles events. Sunday 10th September was reserved for Presidents Day when tea would be supplied free to members and their friends and the finals of the summer tournament would be played. It was decided to bring in caterers for this day, for which various estimates were provided, that being accepted was to cost 1shilling per head. Other business on this day was the presentation of prizes won in connection with the estate gardens competition also an exhibition match by four members of the Essex County team took place.

By July there were 72 fully paid playing members and a scale of fees was agreed for members joining at various times during the year. American tournaments were held on Bank Holidays and the Club's first match, against Gaynes Park, resulted in a 6-1 win with two games unfinished owing to rain. A later return match against Gaynes Park resulted in a 7-2 win.

Off court a cleaner for the pavilion was engaged at a wage of 5shillings per month, after a month she asked for a rise to 10shillings, a compromise was reached at 7s 6d. The cleaner left employment shortly afterwards, however it was not long before another cleaner was employed at the rate of 7s 6d.

Socially, whist drives were even being held on midweek afternoons, dances were still being held at the Bell Hotel and the first annual Dinner Dance was held there in November. The dinner was



attended by 93 members at 5shillings per head; additionally 10 attended the dance only at 2shillings per head. There was one complaint, being that it was not considered satisfactory that members of the Bell Hotel staff had taken to the floor during the dance. As a result of social activities, the sum of £28 5s 1d had been added to funds, in addition, profit on the sale of cigarettes, confectionery and catering amounted to £15 0s 6d.

At the AGM, the annual subscription was adjusted to include the ball fund, to make subscriptions for residents £1 10s 0d and non-

residents £2.

1934 - 1939

Centre of Social Activity

1934

Now with four courts the rental payment was double but still at the rate of £25 per court. The Club needed to attract members, so with the development of the estate, letters were circulated to all residents advertising the facilities.

200 membership cards were printed for the 1934 season by Turner & Dunnett (London) Ltd at a cost of £5 12s 6d. Committee meeting minutes had up till now been hand written in the minute book, the new Secretary considered this arduous, so from April onwards minutes were typed and pasted into the minute book.

Match fixtures had been arranged with Glebe, Upminster, Parkside and Grosvenor Clubs and a Mens team had been entered in the Essex Junior Cup competition with the 1st round being drawn at home with opponents being Faircross. The result was a win for Faircross by 5 matches to 4. Arising out of complaints with regard to selection of match teams, a Ladies Captain, Mrs Green, was appointed, who became a member of the Selection Committee.

The Club was a centre of local social activity with whist drives and dances taking place regularly. During each month there seemed to be at least two whist drives and one dance, all making reasonable profits. Even though the social section was so successful, during the year the Social Secretary resigned.

The Club received an offer for supply of tennis balls from Messers of Holborn at 7s 6d per dozen for Spenser Moulton 'Reject' balls. The Club would receive 2shillings per dozen for old balls returned, making a net cost of 5s 6d. It was therefore agreed that members could purchase balls at 2s 9d per half dozen, provided they were returned after use.

Even in these times there were still the habitual actions of certain members inviting visitors to play on the courts, without making entries in the visitors book and without paying the fee. This prompted the committee into placing a warning on the notice board to take action against the offenders.

At the 3rd AGM the retiring members of the committee were all willing to stand again, so there being no other nominations, were all re-elected to serve for another year. As a result of a ballot, Mrs Patterson was elected as Ladies Captain. The accounts showed a credit balance of £42 4s 9d with the social endeavours contributing a profit of £33 1s 10d for entertainments, £7 7s 5d from the canteen and £12 13s 9d from catering.

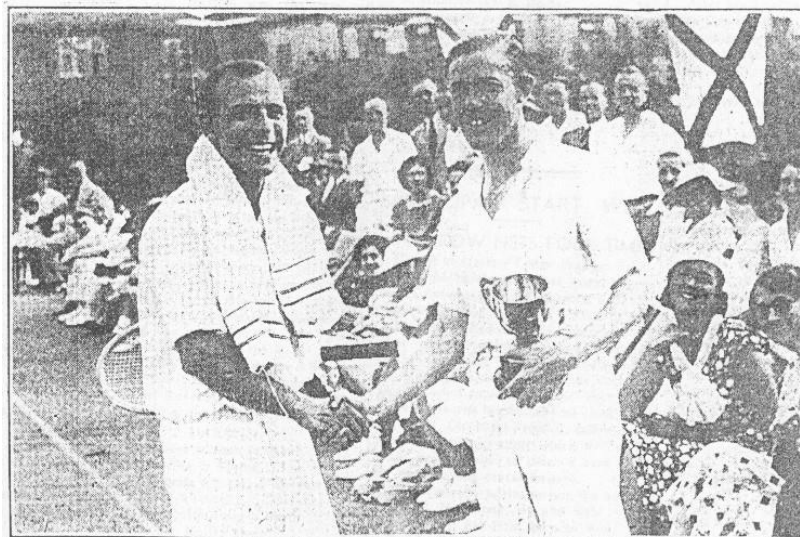
1935

At the end of 1934 the membership stood at around 100. During the early part of the year there seemed to be a high percentage of applications, around 25 by April alone, but the membership was still only just over 100 in May. There were many members who had not paid their subscription; this prompted the committee to display a list of members on the notice board who were not eligible to use the amenities of the club. However by July it was a case of having to refuse some applications as membership had reached its maximum.

A Garden Committee was formed, which apart from looking after the grounds, were empowered to draw up a scheme for the purchasing and planting of poplar trees, for which the President offered to give one tree for every five subscribed for.

A tea lady was engaged during the summer season, at a rate of 5shillings per weekend to assist with the serving of teas and washing up. This cost was recovered by a service charge to those partaking of tea. However there was a serious drop in catering profit and it was suggested that those members who had advocated this expenditure had not followed up with their support by taking tea at the Club.

In order to provide added interest to finals day and with the view of obtaining the interest of other clubs in the area, an approach was made to Grosvenor, Upminster and Gaynes Park Clubs for co-operation in a scheme to provide Upminster with a Mens Singles Championship. The idea was for each Club to nominate their best male player to participate in a contest, with the final taking place on our own finals day. Enthusiastic support was received from Upminster and Gaynes Park Clubs but Grosvenor declined to enter the competition. The President, Mr A Palmer, donated a perpetual trophy for the event appropriately named The Cranston Cup. The winner of this first competition was Cranston Park's Mens Captain and singles champion, Mr J R Mansell.



1936

Apart from tennis and table tennis another recreation was introduced at the Club. A budget of £9 was allotted to prepare the ground and purchase turf to lay a putting green in front of the pavilion. Members would be charged 1penny per round in an attempt to offset the expenses. By May receipts from the putting green amounted to £1 3s 0d, not a bad turnover at 1penny per round.

The Lombardy poplar trees that surrounded the Club for so many years to come were planted. Around 120 trees were originally planted at a cost of £5 10s 0d.

The social functions were still well attended but dances were not making very much profit, occasionally running at a small loss. The whist drives, still being held at least once a month, were showing profits of around £1 each time and the canteen was making a profit of around 10shillings each month.

The playing standard of the men was strong for a Club of its size and the ladies always seemed to have a battle to get teams entered into competitions. The Championships Committee consisted of three men. An example of this bias was a proposal made to enter two pairs for the Leo Lyle Mens Doubles Cup, which was agreed, at the same time a proposal was made that a Ladies team be entered for the Whitcombe Brown Cup, this was defeated. It was not until this year at the 5th AGM that the rules were altered to allow the Ladies Captain to be elected as a member of the committee.

There was obviously some concern over the reliability of the reject balls being purchased and their suitability for matches, so it was decided to purchase Ayres 'Wimbledon' balls at 8shillings per dozen for use in matches.

Numerous complaints were being received regarding the condition of the courts and it was realised that they would need to be replaced. A sub-committee was formed to inspect various types of court with a view to making a recommendation to the Committee for consideration. Mr Palmer was prepared to spend up to £250 on the work, to be repaid by the Club at the rate of £40 per year. The Committee were unanimous that the offer by Mr Palmer was unacceptable and a counter offer was proposed, this was to enter into a new agreement for five years at a rental of £120 per annum on the same conditions as previously, provided the courts were re-laid with a type of surface approved by the committee.

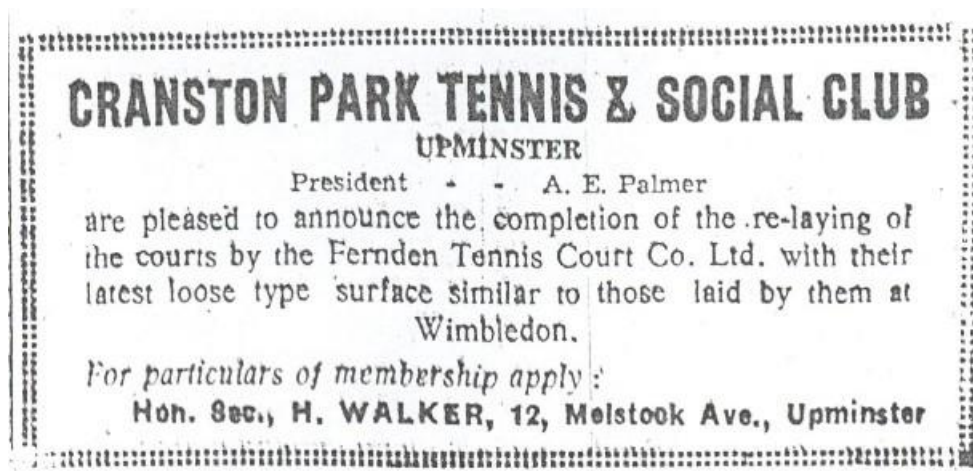
The Committee were in unanimous agreement that an En-Tout-Cas type surface should be laid. Mr Palmer accepted the proposal of the five year agreement at an annual rental of £120, in addition to resurfacing the courts he also agreed to provide watering facilities. In view of the likely increased running expenses of the proposed new courts it was decided to increase the playing membership fee to £2 12s 6d

1937

If tennis, table tennis, putting and whist drives were not enough a small dramatic section was formed with the aim of producing short plays for performance to members during the year.

The new courts were ready for play by the spring and a groundsman was taken on at a wage of 1shilling per hour, attending to the courts for 4 hour periods on four occasions per week. Later in the year the groundsman was employed for a further 2 hours per week to upkeep the putting green.

In a letter to the Committee, the Ladies Captain queried whether the ladies were expected to drag the courts after using them. The reply from the Secretary stated "Whilst the Committee do not wish the ladies to over exert themselves in any way, they do look forward to their kind co-operation in assisting to maintain the good state of the courts particularly in the first few months".



The new courts were announced in the local press

The Essex Mens Junior Cup team had reached the final but were defeated 7-2 by North Ilford 2. The Cranston Challenge Cup was regained by Mr J R Mansell who defeated Mr S C Hubbard in the final.

The social functions for the year had shown good results with 10 whist drives, 2 crazy whist drives, 3 bridge drives, 3 dances and 4 social evenings making a profit of £25 12s 6d, an increase of over £16 from the previous year.

Later in the year plans were drawn up by Mr Palmer, the landlord and President, for 4 grass courts to be laid at the Melstock Gardens end of the club.

1938

The Mens 1st team were entered in the Essex Intermediate Cup only to be defeated 8-1 by Brookside, with a Mens 2nd team entered in the Junior Cup, reaching the 4th round of the competition and beaten 9-0 by Monkham.

The Annual Dinner Dance moved further afield to Southend's Palace Hotel. The cost was 5s 6d per head with the band booked at a fee of £4 4s 0d. It was at this Dinner Dance that the Club Championship presentations were made for the first time, as opposed to being presented on finals day.

Table tennis took a step into the unknown with entry into the Romford League for the 1938/39 season, on the proviso that all entry fees should be self financing from the table tennis section.

Towards the end of the year a special committee meeting was held, the aim was to acquaint the Committee with the financial situation. The situation was a cash balance of £19 13s 2d with an estimated expenditure to 31st December of £30 3s 0d. The solution was to obtain as much profit as possible from social functions, with an estimate of raising approximately £14 to place the Club on a better financial basis.

The 4 grass courts were being constructed, but owing to the current financial position it was unlikely that the Club could take them over and incur any further liability. Suggestions were made that they should be opened as public courts during the 1939 summer season with the Club hiring them for home matches.

The championship board on which the Club's singles champions are shown was donated by the President, Mr A E Palmer, and following the submission of a specimen of signwriting by the Assistant Secretary, he was given the job of signwriting at cost of materials only.

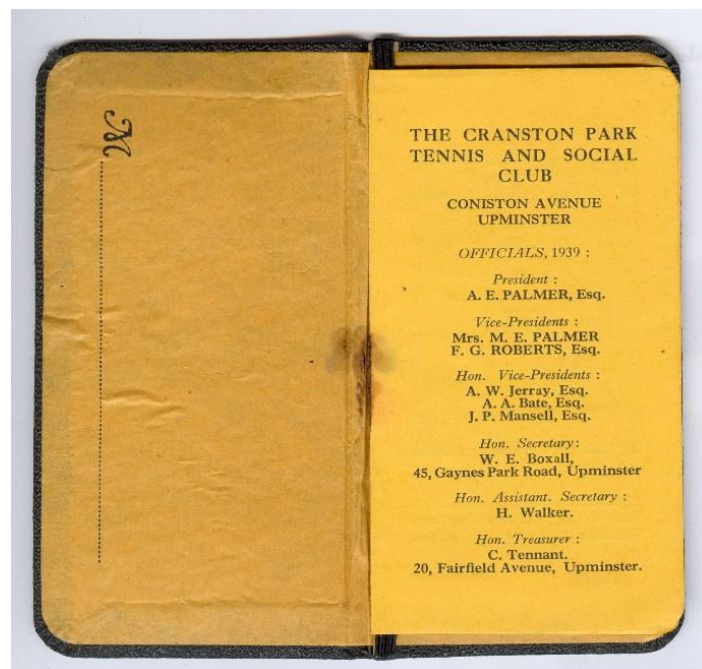
1939

The new year started with the financial position of £9 9s 9d being the total cash balance. Although there were bills to be paid, there always seemed to be profits coming in from functions to cover them. There were also donations from Mr Palmer, typically a donation of £5 5s 0d which included £1 1s 0d to cover a loss made on the Annual Dinner Dance.

The summer season saw the innovation of a new scheme for the control of play with members entering their names on a slate and the first person arranging a set from those included in the first eight. The weekly programme of play was arranged such that each evening or weekend session was dedicated to one type of set only, i.e. 'Mixed', 'Mens', 'Ladies' or 'Own Sets'.

The effect of the outbreak of war in September was felt immediately, an emergency meeting was held at the Club. The Mens Captain had been evacuated with his firm and the Secretary had joined the RAF, members were co-opted to fill these positions. Black-out arrangements were put in hand but until it was completed all light bulbs were removed. As soon as these arrangements had been made whist drives and solo whist drives were held on alternate Saturdays and in spite of the black-out were very popular and proving to be a fair source of income.

The table tennis team entered in the Romford League was undefeated until the last match of the season which they lost 12-13. This success would normally have meant promotion to Division 1 but owing to the outbreak of war all further fixtures had been cancelled.



1939 Membership card

Within seven years courts went from two to ultimately eight available. Money was tight but many social functions, putting green hire and canteen sales kept the club solvent. The ground was still owned by Mr Palmer with the rent depleting the funds to a minimum. Mr Palmers encouraging remarks at the AGM were that it was his desire that every effort should be made to see the Club through the war time period and that the question of rent would depend on the Club's finances but normal overheads should be met first.

So the Club was to face its greatest challenge against the European doubles partnership of Hitler and Mussolini.

1940 - 1945

The Club at War

1940

All members who were serving in the Forces were allowed to retain their membership without payment of subscription for the duration of the war.

The competition for the Cranston Cup was suspended during the war period, as was the Club Championships, although some tournaments were arranged but were not classified as Club Championship events.

There became a demand for temporary membership during the summer months for which a scheme was formulated, being 1st April to 31st October (7 months) at £1 15s 0d or 1st May to 30th September (5 months) at £1 10s 0d, with an entrance fee of 2s 6d for new members. Within this period around 20 additional members took up the option. With the boost in numbers this created it was decided to continue this type of membership during the war period. Arrangements were made for collection of membership fees to allow one payment in full, two payments or monthly payments.

1941

Great difficulty was experienced in procuring supplies for the canteen and for catering. Owing to the shortages and the difficulty in obtaining replacements an appeal to the membership was made for spare crockery.

More balls than normal were purchased as a precaution against supplies becoming short and initially only three balls were issued for use per court each week. Again the summer membership scheme was very popular and in view of this an increase was made to four balls per court. However after the summer new balls were issued at fortnightly intervals.

A weekly programme for playing arrangements was devised which included committee controlled play on weekends and Wednesday evening, own sets on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evening and MEN ONLY on Friday evening. Within a month of this allocation an approach to the Committee was made regarding the 'Mens Night' and the allocation altered to only two courts reserved for men only.

A closing comment at the AGM from a member, who had been at Grosvenor Tennis Club for 10 years, stated that during his first year at this Club he had been very happy and had come to the conclusion that it was possible for a Tennis and Social Club to be a success.

1942

A Club news bulletin was started and issued about every two months; this was also sent to the serving members of HM Forces. There were a total number of 28 members known to be serving in the Forces at this time.



A typical Sunday afternoon social gathering in 1942

1943

The general arrangements for the year largely depended on the supply of tennis balls therefore it was decided that there would be one subscription of £1 5s 0d for the year, this being supplemented if new balls were forthcoming. Later some new balls were obtained and the subscription was increased to £2. To help alleviate the situation old balls were sent away to be reconditioned.

Friction within the Committee resulted in the resignation of the Vice Captain following alleged remarks detrimental to the Committee as to the running of the Club. The Secretary also tendered his resignation due to the remarks made but later withdrew it in order to avoid any further disruption to the Club.

During the year it was decided to start a social membership category, for which the subscription would be 5shillings per year. The idea was to cater for those people who wished to help the Club in some way but did not desire to play tennis or table tennis.

Tennis nets were becoming worn and needed attention, as did the pavilion. The ladies agreed to carry out the task of painting as soon as paint was forthcoming. The blackout arrangements were unsatisfactory and utility blackout material had to be purchased to line the existing curtains.

Ladies and Mens Doubles Tournaments were held but by far the outstanding success during the summer was the 'Wings for Victory' Tournament, arranged by the Club, with nearly 200 people attending.



August Bank Holiday event in 1943

1944

A Junior tennis section was formed.

The Forces Bulletin was still being issued every two months, also a Forces Christmas Gift Fund had met with good response and gifts were dispatched to those serving.

Reconditioned tennis balls had been provided throughout the summer but it was only possible for used balls to be provided during the winter months.

The largest attendance so far for any event was for an Open Tennis Tournament arranged in connection with the local 'Salute the Soldier' savings week. This saw Mr & Mrs J Black win the Mixed Doubles with Mr R Ling and Mr L Shepherd winning the Mens Doubles for the Club. The financial outcome resulted in a cheque for £33 12s 9d being sent to the Essex Regiment Benevolent Fund.

1945

The Club was still paying rent to Mr Palmer, the landlord, but on a gentleman's agreement basis as the last agreement had expired at the end of 1941. It was therefore thought necessary to come to some arrangement to safeguard the position of the Club in the event of anything happening to Mr Palmer. The response from Mr Palmer was a new agreement under the same terms and conditions as in the previous agreement in 1937, for a period of two years with the option of renewing for a further period of two years.

The grounds were looking worse for wear, wire netting had holes in many places, lead tape for the court lines was scarce, grass and weeds were growing on the courts and the grass was getting out of control around the courts. A scythe had to be found for the groundsman who had only recently been employed.

During the summer things started to get back to some normality, with an invitation from other Clubs to play matches, so a Match Selection Committee was formed. The district table tennis league meeting was held and a Table Tennis Sub-Committee was appointed. In celebration of peace a Victory Tennis Tournament was held in conjunction with other Clubs in the district, the proceeds being donated to the British Legion Building Fund.

The social side had continued throughout the war with bridge, whist drives, etc. on three Saturday nights per month, with the fourth being a social night. These events with the profits made from them and catering certainly helped the Club to stay operational throughout the wartime period and helped boost the financial standing from a low level in 1939 to a reasonable balance of £52 5s 1d.

The playing membership had stayed at an average of around 60 since 1940, with 29 members serving with the Forces.

With the end of the war came the standing down of Mr Palmer from the office of President, the landowner who had inaugurated the Club in 1932 had been most generous through the years. It was with regret that he had to relinquish the position and he was elected a Life Vice-President.

**VICTORY TENNIS
TOURNAMENT**

On Sunday afternoon a large crowd attended the finals of the Victory tennis tournament organised by the Cranston Park Tennis and Social Club, with the co-operation of the Grosvenor and Grove Clubs. Despite the inclemency of the weather a successful and enjoyable afternoon was spent at the Cranston Park Club's courts.

The results of the finals were:—

Ladies' doubles.—Mrs. Black and Mrs. Smith (Cranston Park) beat Miss Collins and Miss Hope (Grosvenor) 6-3, 7-6.

Men's doubles.—Cpl. Ling and L. Shepherd (Cranston Park) beat A. Baker and A. MacKenzie 6-3, 6-4.

Mixed doubles.—Cpl. Ling and Mrs. Black (Cranston Park) beat R. Hart and Miss Collins (Grosvenor) 6-0, 6-2.

The umpires were Messrs. A. Walker, A. Shearman and J. P. Mansell.

The proceeds of this tournament are to be devoted to the Building Fund of the Upminster and Cranham branch of the British Legion. During the afternoon the branch ran a number of side-shows in collaboration with the Grove T.C., which proved an enjoyable diversion during the intervals between the finals.

Mr. A. E. Nash, Chairman of the Upminster branch of the British Legion, distributed the prizes and thanked the organisers for their whole-hearted efforts on behalf of the Legion's Building Fund.

The installation of broadcasting apparatus by Mr. Hay was an innovation which helped greatly to add to the enjoyment of the afternoon, the success of which reflects great credit on the organisers and the committee responsible for the arrangements.

Recorder report of Victory Tennis Tournament

1946 -1953

The Post War Years

1946

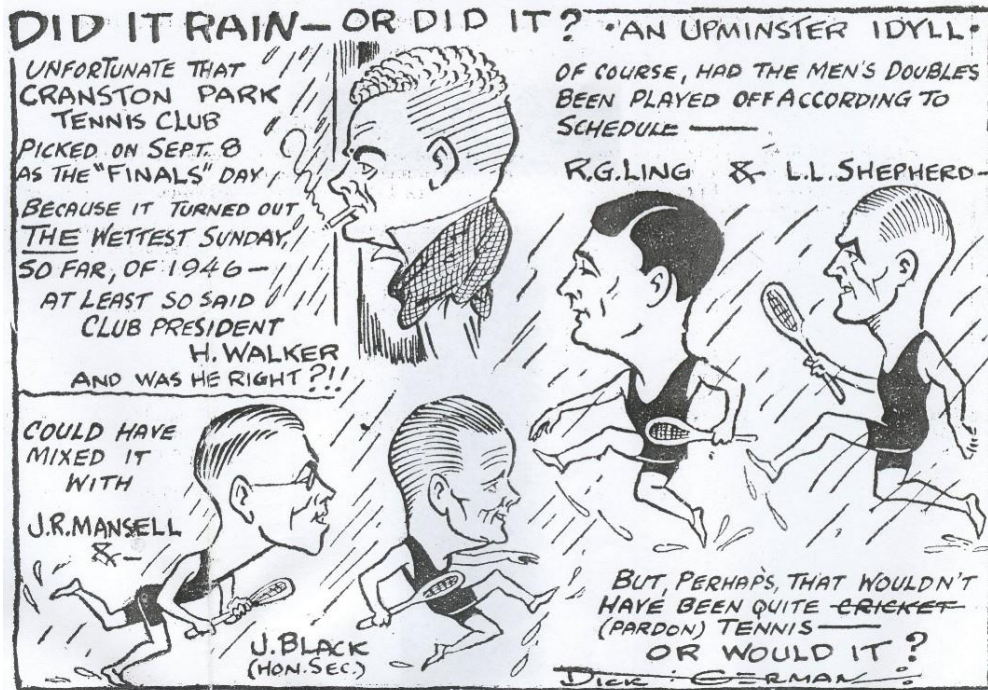
The office of President was filled by Mr H Walker and the Captaincy by Mr R Ling. A sub-committee had been formed to study the future of the Club and consequently the playing membership fee increased to £3 3s 0d, non-playing at 10shillings with junior membership at 15shillings.

The return to the Romford Table Tennis League was successful and the expansion of the league enabled the Club to enter two Mens and one Ladies team for the 1946/47 season.

Work was needed on the courts with new posts required on three courts, new wire netting and the reconditioning of all courts. The landlord, Mr Palmer, arranged for the work to be done by Ferndens with a financial agreement that the Club would pay £100 annually for three years, representing the £300 cost of work. £52 annually would also be paid for the same three years as rent. Following on the Club would pay £100 rent annually for the next four years, during which time the Club would be responsible for rates and repairs, leaving Mr Palmer no further responsibility during that time, until the end of seven years. After the expiry of seven years there would be the option of renewal.

Tournaments saw the reinstatement of the Club Championship events for the first time since 1939, but the return of the Cranston Cup competition was put on hold. A Jubilee Team Tournament, which was run by the London Parks Association, was entered with two teams, the first team reaching the semi-final. Mrs M Lugar became the first member to receive county honours by playing for the Essex LTA against Sussex.

The pavilion was in demand with bookings from Wardens and Home Guard along with the continuing social events of whist drives, bridge drives and solo drives. These card nights were still popular and making a very welcome profit but were moved to Fridays to enable other social events to take place for members on Saturdays. A very active Social Sub-Committee arranged a six month social programme to ensure the continuity of events would be maintained through the winter months. The social programme even warranted the compilation and printing of a booklet of social functions for which the printing cost of £7 5s 6d must have been considered worthwhile. In fact the Treasurer's report stated that the increased profit for the year was gained from extra social activities.



These sketches were published in the Recorder by Dick German

Events also included regular outings to the Wembley Pool for ice hockey and professional tennis. At this time professionals were not allowed to play at Wimbledon, Davis Cup or in LTA events, so these visits were very special. The first venture was ice hockey at Wembley for which two 32 seat coaches were filled with a cost of 7s 6d per head which covered the travelling and the 2s 6d seat cost.

Towards the end of the year there were a total of 82 playing members and it was decided that the maximum number had been reached. By the end of the year a waiting list of 9 had been recorded.

1947

The outings to Wembley continued in February with the Professional Lawn Tennis Tournament followed the next weekend by ice hockey.

It was brought to the Committees notice that certain members had been gambling in the pavilion for rather high stakes and that they had brought in visitors for this sole purpose, the Committee took a very serious view of this matter with warning letters sent to the culprits.

The work required on the courts was getting urgent, but it was not until June that work was completed. In the meantime the services of a part-time groundsman had been obtained with a full-time groundsman taken on by July at £3 per week.

Mrs M Lugar, the Club's first county representative, was the subject of a committee letter by the fact that having joined she then played in County Cup matches for Gidea Park, after having agreed to play for Cranston Park. Mr R Mansell, until this year a member, was selected to play for England thus becoming the Club's first international, in recognition he was offered honorary membership, which he accepted. Also Mr J P Mansell had been elected to the Essex County Tennis Committee.

Finals day became quite an affair requiring a special committee meeting for arrangements. Estimated attendance was 100 to 150 with a set tea provided for 1s 3d per head. Court 2 was closed from the Wednesday before for preparation and seating was made available on courts 1 and 3 for spectators. 300 programmes were printed, for sale at 6d each, which were available during the week before the event.



Finals Day lineup 1947

1948

The junior section membership was limited to 16 juniors. The age limit was 12 to 17 years with the subscription at £1 1s 0d. Playing arrangements were confined to two evenings and Saturday morning, using one court only, and three evenings on two courts up to 6pm.

The Cranston Cup was re-introduced with the entry restricted to residents within a 2 miles radius of Upminster and to members of any club within that area. With the re-introduction was the addition of a ladies event. The finals day, for which 303 programmes were sold, was supplemented by exhibition matches arranged by Mr R Mansell. The winner of the Mens event was Mr R Ling and the Ladies winner was Miss E Lewis.

Towards the end of the year talks were started with Mr Palmer, the landlord, with a view for the Club to purchase the property.

1949

Plans were got underway to buy the land, with special meetings held to consider and approve the proposals submitted by Mr A Palmer. After initial reluctance by the nominated Trustees as to their possible liability, the agreement was finalised for the purchase of the ground. This entailed ten annual payments of £65 to Mr Palmer, plus an annual payment of £55 into a maintenance fund with one final payment of £2000 after the ten years to complete the purchase.

The club's first telephone was installed (Upminster 5126).

Socially a badminton section was formed, to be played outdoors; the necessary equipment had been acquired at a cost of £1. Cricket matches were the other sporting events to be arranged. The revival of the Dinner Dance took place being held at the Bell Hotel at a cost of 12s 6d per head, but other events such as socials, quizzes and whist drives were poorly attended and consequently were discontinued. The Club Bulletin, published regularly each month, was renamed 'Service'.



Finals Day 1949

1950

Now the Club were in the process of purchasing the grounds, the need for an increase of income was imperative. In order to attract new members an advertisement was inserted in the Hornchurch & Upminster News. A '£2000 Fund' Sub-Committee was set up to look at ways to raise the money necessary to pay for the ground.

The purse strings had to be pulled in. A plea for loans to purchase the hired refrigerator gained little response, so was removed. The groundsman agreed to accept half rate pay. Midweek bridge drives and other social functions were arranged to bring in some profits but the Dinner Dance was cancelled.

The Townswomens Guild started to use the Clubhouse for one afternoon per week at a charge of 10shillings.



Dick German sketch of the 1951 Upminster & Hornchurch Hardcourts Championships

1951

Funds were boosted by the running of a football pontoon scheme with a profit of approximately £2 per week. A Derby draw also made a profit of £23 3s 4d.

The Townswomens Guild extended their activities onto the tennis court. They were let one court at a charge of £5, from April to September, with £2 for winter months and quickly obtained the use of an extra court.

The Cranston Cup competition was expanded to include more events and with consultation with other local clubs was renamed the Upminster & Hornchurch Tournament.

At the AGM it was resolved that the Club Bulletin be discontinued, as there had been publishing difficulties during the year. Everyday matters would be posted on the notice board and any important matters would be circulated to members by the Committee.

1952

The grass courts, which had flourished before the war, had fallen into disuse. Despite attempts to renovate them, in conjunction with the local education authority, for school and junior use, they were abandoned.

1953

Mr R Ling added a third title, The Romford Coronation Tournament, as well as the Club Tournament and the Upminster & Hornchurch Tournament.

1954 -1969

From Rags to Riches

1954

The start of the year looked bleak with a grand sum of £5 13s 0d in the bank and £9 13s 9d in hand. The Treasurer was concerned and suggested several fund raising ventures. The Secretary expressed concern with the difficulty of signing cheques due to the infrequent attendance of the Treasurer at the Club, then without delay the Treasurer resigned. With economy in mind the telephone service was disconnected.

The Romford & District Lawn Tennis League was formed.

1955

The power of the Committee in these times was unquestionable. They decided that the standard of play of an existing lady member was considered too low to justify continued membership; the Secretary was instructed to write, as tactfully as possible, informing her of the Committee's decision not to permit her to rejoin.

Investigations into obtaining a Nissen or similar type hut for the purpose of table tennis and other recreation was sought but the expense was too much and the idea was dropped.

The Hornchurch & Upminster Tournaments Committee started up a junior section of the event.

The Club's junior section seemed to be thriving, with only a membership of 24, there were a further 24 applicants on the waiting list.

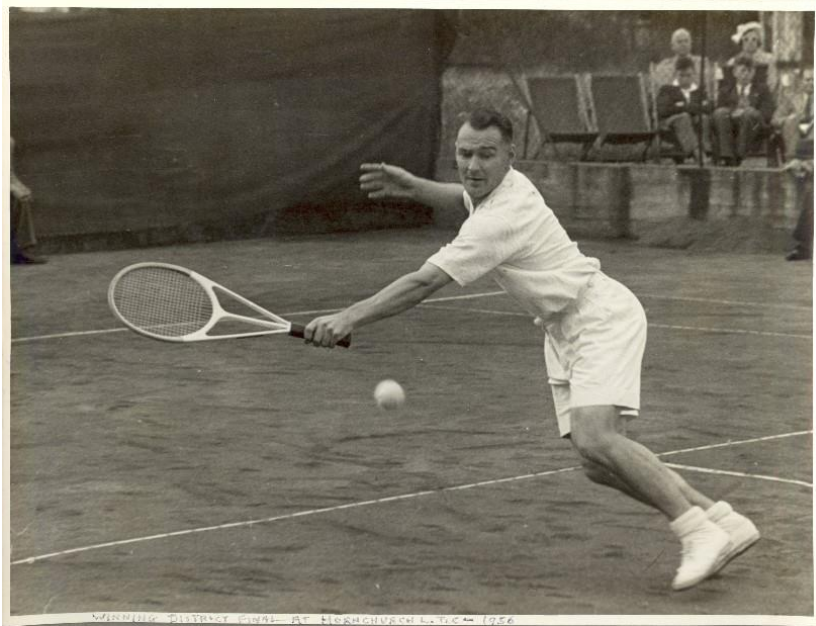
1956

A Club bar was established with its control in the hands of a 'Wines Committee'. The bar itself was initially a temporary structure, being a counter loaned from Watneys, for the summer months, and if successful to be made more permanent. The only formalities were to register with the Clerk to the Local Justices and to alter the rules to comply with the requirements of the local licensing authority. The official opening of the bar was arranged on the 2nd June with suitable entertainment laid on.

With the installation of the bar came the question as to whether table tennis would be permitted during the winter months but it was decided that the bar would be dismantled at the end of the summer to allow table tennis to be played.

The Townswomens Guild decided that the Club was too far from the centre of Upminster and therefore would not be renewing the hire of the pavilion any more on Wednesdays.

The Mens 1st team were triumphant in the Essex Junior Cup for the first time with the 2nd team reaching the final in the 'B' division of the same competition.



Mr R Ling in action in the District Finals at Hornchurch Tennis Club

1957

Arrangements to purchase the freehold of the Club property were still ongoing. The latest proposal was by means of a £1400 mortgage from Mr Palmer repayable at an interest rate of 4% per annum, over a period of 16 years.

The Club held its first fete in the Rectory grounds of St Lawrence Church, which was a major success with a profit in the region of £60 and an offer of the use of the gardens again if desired.

From the rather discouraging financial outlook of the last few years, this had turned out to be the most successful year since the war. The success had not been confined to finance alone but a bazaar, jumble sale, fete, barbecue and all the dances had all played their part.

1958

The junior section was getting a little out of hand, not with their playing abilities, but with their activities within the clubhouse. Following previous minor damage and a warning, some damage was inflicted on the pavilion wall which was apparently caused by a non-member. This resulted in a fine of £1 to cover repairs and restricted access for junior members, allowing changing purposes only.

An extension to the pavilion was made to cater for the bar in order to alleviate the need for the temporary installation. The finance for this came from bar profit and amounted to £32 9s 6d.

1959

The Glebe Tennis Club was disbanding and an effort was made to recruit some of their members.

Following an approach in 1958 from the Grove Cricket Club, it was agreed they could use the Club name, pavilion and have a practice wicket installed on the grounds. In return they paid the Club £10 per year and 5shillings per member as a non-playing membership fee. The practice wicket was laid diagonally across where court 6 now stands.

With the introduction of the cricketers came a problem. Complaints were received that late night drinking was taking place, for which the cricketers were warned but contested the fact. However, their drinking habits resulted in the Cricket Club being granted a third of the bar net profit, due to the fact that most of the profits were obtained as a result of their efforts.

In September the Club was formed into a Limited Company, known as 'Cranston Park Tennis & Social Club Limited' with the share capital of the Company as £100, divided into 100 shares of £1 each. There were four Directors, Mr R Anderson and Mr A Lee who were the only two shareholders, each with one share, along with Mr P Cracknell and Mr S Hubbard.

1960

Although it was back in 1957 that the purchase of the Club grounds was authorised by members, it had taken until now to finalise all arrangements and sign the appropriate documentation. The agreement was "In consideration of the sum of £2520 paid by Cranston Park Tennis & Social Club Limited, the vendor Mr A E Palmer, conveyed the parcel of land stated as situate at the rear of Coniston Avenue and being part of the Cranston Park Estate, together with the rights of way leading from Brackendale Gardens and Coniston Avenue to the Club". Finance for the acquisition was made possible with an £1800 mortgage arranged with the vendor.

The addition of a shower block to the mens changing room was a project started this year. Having been first investigated and proposed in August 1959, the brickwork was completed in April, the roof fitted by June, then the plumber was not available to complete the work. This shower block is now the only part of the old clubhouse still standing and in use as a storage shed.

The Mens team won the Essex Intermediate Cup for the first time.

1961

The Club entered the Essex Senior League.

At the beginning of the year the showers still had not been completed. An effort was made to get a plumber and by August the showers were finished. Interestingly these showers became a communal facility as the Club could not afford to build showers onto the ladies changing room at this time.

It was deemed that the pavilion would not be used as a communal meeting hall and that the playing of cards should be banned. Gambling appeared to have taken over from the more sedate evenings of a decade earlier.

The membership stood at about 45 Full Playing, 8 Midweek, 40 Juniors and 20 Cricketers.

1962

It was decided that the junior section should be completely reformed, with the numbers being cut down and the formation of a younger section.

There became the need to look at further ways to raise some funds to pay for resurfacing of the courts, with the preference to change the colour of the surface from grey to red. Once again a membership recruitment drive was a suggestion with an option of taking any standard of player.

1963

The Club entered a team in the newly formed ladies section of the Essex League.

A request came from the Essex Electricity Authority to lease or buy a piece of land 17x15 feet for a sub-station. The sale of the piece of land was agreed at £250 with the Electricity Authority also providing a new set of double gates to the Brackendale Gardens entrance.

The junior section was in trouble again later in the year. Owing to the damaged condition in which the pavilion was found, it was agreed that junior activities should be suspended until the following season.

1964

The electricity sub-station was completed with the proceeds of the sale being set against the mortgage.

Horses were now being kept in the grounds. It was questioned as to whether they should be there in view of the mortgage conditions and would the Club be covered by insurance if they should cause any damage. Someone was also using the car park as storage for their Armstrong Siddeley car, which the owner eventually removed.

The Ladies team won the Essex Junior Cup and the Essex League division 2.

1965

Nothing very exciting seemed to happen this year, or it may have been that nothing much got reported.

1966

The Club President of many years, Mr J P Mansell died. Mr Mansell was a founder member of the Club and a very active member of the Committee. He had also been a representative on the Essex County Committee.

The Club Tournament had got out of hand this season resulting in there being no finals day. Each event had to be concluded as and when possible.

1967

The financial position was reasonably good but it was apparent that subscriptions were too low to meet the normal running expenses.

Interest in the junior section had improved along with behaviour and playing standards, therefore annual membership was restored. The 1963 decision to confine activities to the summer season only was rescinded.

There were requests from two adjacent residents for right of way through the Club grounds, one for access to a garage, the other to a garden for a caravan. These were agreed at a nominal fee of 1shilling per year.

The grounds had become tided up mainly as a result of the horses receiving their marching orders.

1968

As a result of the clean up of the grounds, a grass tennis court was set out.

For some time there had been talk of paying off the balance of the mortgage to purchase the ground. Since taking on the mortgage in 1959, annual instalments of £120 had been paid plus an extra instalment on the sale of land to the Electricity Board. At the end of the year the balance due was £600.

TENNIS ... 1968
by Dave Armstrong

AMBITIOUS PARK WANT FLOODLIGHTS

Mention the names of Molly Black and Ron Ling in local tennis circles and you are talking about the almost legendary stalwarts of Cranston Park Tennis Club.

Molly, who was club champion in 1946 and 1953, is still, believe it or not, ladies captain and a regular member of the club's first team.

While Ling dominated the club's men's title FROM 1946 UNTIL 1963. During this period he only lost his title

The men's first team, which usually consist of Ron Dinge, Morton Newman, Martin Vine, Ray Stainer, Ron Newby, Ron Wesley and Barry Cecil, plays in the Essex Senior Cup and the Essex League Division I.

The ladies hit a standard between the 1st and 2nd Essex League and are at present in the latter competition, captained by Molly Black. Their formation usually reads Audrey

ing Essex junior champion and his sister, 14-year-old Janice, recently won the Elm Park Open Tournament against opponents twice her age.

Two years ago Martin Vine appeared at junior Wimbledon and has also represented the county at that level.

In the local Havering Championships, Cranston share most of the honours with rivals Gidea Park. Last year Ron Ling and Morton Newman were men's doubles champions. They have dominated the boy's singles events for the past few years and look set to continue the run.

The club's reigning men's champion is Dennis Jenkins. Ladies champion is Marian Newman, who last year ended the four year run of Jill Jenkins.

Main committee members are: Captain Ron Newby; Vice-Captain, Martin Vine; Secretary, Dave Neeson; and Ladies Captain, Molly Black.

Their main aims for the future are to extend the present clubhouse, add to the existing four courts, and to erect flood-lighting for at least one court.

To raise funds to finance these ambitious dreams, the club holds many social functions and they plan to hold a Summer Fair at their headquarters in September.

Cranston Park members should be reasonably fit for, apart from playing tennis all summer, members keep in training during the winter months by playing table tennis or representing the club in soccer friendlies against other local tennis clubs.



Mrs. NEWMAN



MARTIN VINE

SPOTLIGHT on Cranston Park

twice, in 1955 and 1957.

The Cranston Park Tennis Club, which is situated in Coniston Avenue, Upminster, was formed in 1936 by a local builder.

The four hard courts have not only served the local tennis enthusiasts but have been graced by some of the world's top players. For, before the war, the club annually held a major open tournament which attracted entries from top Davis and Wightman Cup stars.

Although it is no longer a regular haunt of the nation's top players, Cranston Park still entertains some of the top county players. The club has teams playing in the Essex leagues and regularly competes against such renowned teams as Connaught, Aldersbrook and Westcliff.

Abbott, Marian Newman, Eve Simmons, Ruth Nudd and Ann Phillips.

The club have a senior membership of 75, while the junior section holds its maximum of 50 with a long waiting list.

Cranston boast one of the strongest junior sections in the county. They enter both boys and girls sides in the Essex Junior Cup and are hopeful for the future with bright youngsters such as Barry Cecil, Jon Batten, Stephen Snook, David Haskins and Dermot Turner in the boys section.

CECILS SHINE

The girls who usually represent the club are Ann Phillips, Hilary Newman, Janice Cecil and Carol Hammond.

Some of the youngsters have already met with considerable success. Barry Cecil is reign-

Article from The Echo - Spotlight on Cranston Park

1969

The settlement of the mortgage was finalised, with the outstanding amount of £600 repaid to Mr Palmer and the deeds released to the Club. This considerably reduced the Club's balance of cash.

Junior teams were entered in the newly formed Romford & District Junior League for U16s along with teams from Grosvenor, West Horndon and Gidea Park.

Mr M Vine was elected Mens Captain, a post he would hold for some time.

The gas operated showers were condemned as unsafe, so were put 'Out of Order'. An electric shower, operated through a slot meter, was installed as a replacement.



Car Rally gathering in the grounds 1969

1970 - 1979

Out of the Ashes

1970

On the evening of Thursday 2nd April the Club pavilion was partially destroyed by fire after entry had been made by an unknown intruder. Estimates for the repair were received within the region of £1500.

Following the fire the Club was approached by Pinkney Bros. (Builders) with the idea of leasing or buying the land to build squash courts. Beresford & Co. (Estate Agents) intimated that they had clients who might be interested in purchasing the land and would find the Club alternative accommodation. These alternatives were rejected by the Committee who agreed that a new pavilion should be erected.

The Club accepted the offer of £1507 from the insurance company in final settlement for the cost of repair. On Saturday 14th November demolition started on part of the pavilion.

With money required for re-building, various fund raising projects were proposed. One such project was a '200' Club with members subscribing £6 per year, becoming social members with quarterly prize draws. This project was got under way by Mr D Batten; the first draw taking place in October with a 1st prize of £14.



1971

The demolition of the remainder of the old pavilion was completed and the site cleared in preparation for the new building. Based on an estimate of £6000 to replace building and furniture, a grant of £2615 was made available from the Department of the Environment. To cover some of the remaining cost a loan of £1200 was made available from the Lawn Tennis Association.

To safeguard the Clubs interests an architect was appointed and a firm order for the building was placed in April. The grants enabled the pavilion to include changing rooms with showers, kitchen, bar lounge and recreation hall.

With completion of the pavilion came arrangements for fitting out the bar for which several breweries were consulted, the Courage Brewery being chosen. Terms for letting of the pavilion for functions and a new set of rules for the management of the Club were also produced.

The first committee meeting to be held in the new pavilion was in December.



1972

The final cost of the pavilion was £5811. £4223 was covered by grants from the Department of the Environment, London Borough of Havering and the fire insurance. This left £1588 provided by the Club of which £1200 was financed by an LTA loan.

Concern was expressed over the use of the Club grounds bordering the rear of gardens in Melstock Avenue. A few neighbours had been using this land for allotments, some of them since the war, others just keeping the ground tidy. It was felt prudent to point out to these neighbours that at some time this land may be required for development of the Club and that there had never been any formal agreements to its use as allotments.

Plans were put in hand to apply for planning permission for additional courts and to enquire about loans to finance this project and the resurfacing of the existing courts.

1973

A Club badge was chosen and produced in the Club colours of amber and black.

The existing grey shale courts were resurfaced in red shale by Gazes Ltd at a cost of £4217; this included laying a water supply to the courts and drainage repairs.

There was concern regarding the Lombardy poplar trees in the grounds both from members and surrounding neighbours. Letters were sent to neighbours in Cranston Park Avenue and Brackendale Gardens requesting their views, after which the majority of the trees were removed from the grounds.

A Club publication in the form of a quarterly newsletter was produced with distribution to all members.

The completion of the new pavilion had also revitalised the social side with considerable work and effort by the Social Secretary. Three discos, annual dance, car treasure hunt, cheese and wine party, Indian evening and barbecue giving a £260 contribution to funds, showing a 40% increase on the previous year. Additionally the first fete within the grounds was held, making a profit of £460.



1974

The tennis dress code was relaxed with agreement that coloured tennis shirts could be worn for ordinary club play but not for matches or tournaments.

The Club donated a trophy to the Essex League for the Ladies division 2 winners, which was named the 'Cranston Park Trophy'.

1975

A planning application was submitted for three new courts and floodlighting but had to be reconsidered as the floodlighting aspect had to be withdrawn due to pressure from local residents.

A brick built barbecue was constructed which, with profits made from functions, paid for itself by July. Socially fondue evenings became a new venture.

In October the remainder of the poplar trees were felled because they had become dangerous. Professional tree fellers cut the trunks and large branches with Club members manning the ropes to control the fall.



1976

The post of Junior Secretary was created to be included as a member of the Management Committee.

Estimates were received for the three additional courts from Fernden Ltd, Grassphalte Ltd and Gazes Ltd with the latter receiving the contract at a cost of £8825. This was for three all weather hard courts, colour sprayed red and green. Loans were arranged from the National Playing Fields Association for £850, the LTA for £1500 and a Club member for £2000 but the majority was made available from funds. The Contractors also offered a deferred payment of £1500 for one year at a very favourable interest rate.



Construction of courts 5-7

Cranston Park as a limited company, originally formed to hold the land, ceased to exist. Each of the directors formally resigned and the Club was transferred from company status to that of a trusteeship. It had become administratively cumbersome and expensive, therefore the freehold land and premises was transferred to three Trustees.

1977

The 'B' section was formed to provide tennis for those who could not quite make the required playing standard. It was agreed to keep the initial maximum at 24 members.

1978

The junior section was thriving with a full membership of 150 and a waiting list of around 30.

The Greene King Brewery offered their services for the supply of beers, wines and spirits, with assistance for furnishing the bar if it was extended. The changeover from Courage to Greene King went ahead.

The Dinner Dance was held at Furze Hill for which 146 tickets had been sold. The social events that became really popular were the fondue evenings, which were selling out two months in advance.

1979

The coaching of the juniors on Monday evenings became too much for just two coaches, so two additional coaches were appointed to assist.

Plans for a pavilion extension were approved with various stages of development. It was decided to proceed with the first stage which included extensions to the changing rooms and kitchen, a bar store, entrance and waiting area. Finance for the project was assisted by loans from the Sports Council and LTA

1980 - 1985

The Club in Dispute

1980

With the relaxation of the dress code back in 1974, some clothing worn on court was becoming unsuitable, so it was stipulated that only tennis wear should be allowed and no slogans would be permitted.

A snooker table was purchased by a few members with the idea of forming a snooker section.

The pavilion extension was completed by building contractors, Spencer Smith Developments Ltd, financed by an interest free loan of £5000 from the Sports Council, a loan of £2000 from the LTA and a grant of £750 from Havering Council's Lottery Fund. The Club withheld the final payment due, amounting to £1711, this included £942 retention money held against satisfactory completion of defects. This left £769 in dispute, which resulted in a writ being issued to the Club Chairman by the contractor's solicitor.

Wednesday evenings saw the innovation of 'Club and Grub' with food being provided after social tennis.

Table tennis was thriving with five teams entered in league competitions and three of those teams in the first division.

The Midweek Ladies had an influx of members, which included men, so was renamed Midweek section.

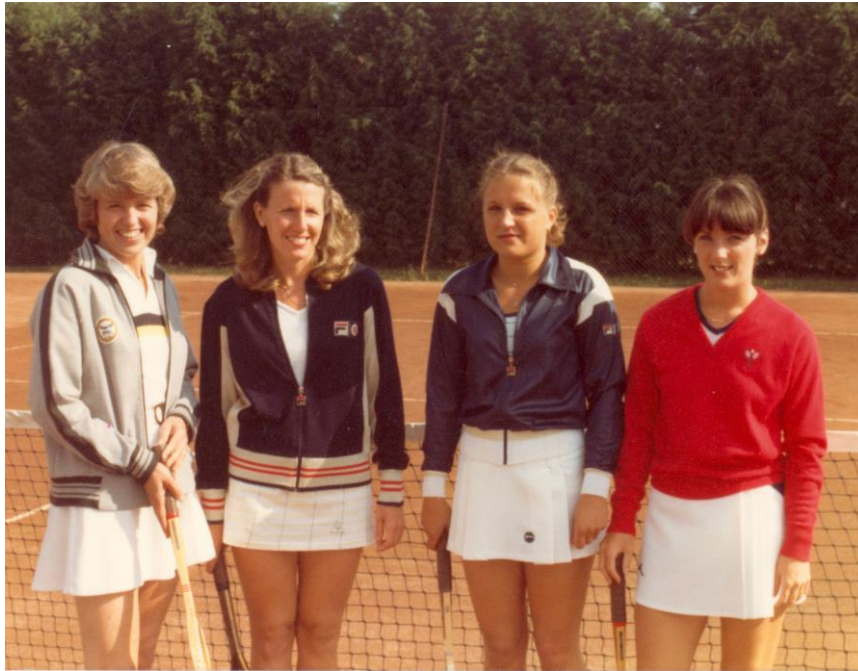
Socially there were some highly successful functions, both enjoyment and financial wise. During the winter months 5 fondue evenings were held, the Dinner Dance was a sell out and the barbecues proved very popular during the summer.

1981

Subscriptions took a leap of nearly 50% across all categories of membership. This was necessary due to repayments required on loans raised to fund the pavilion extension; the cost of resurfacing the drive, the funding of already approved extensions to the pavilion and the cost of major renewals and repairs. The full playing subscription of £40 per annum, or about 75p per week, was evaluated as equivalent to less than two pints of beer or half a gallon of petrol.

The Club was unhappy with the condition of the surfaces on hard courts 5, 6 and 7 and felt that Gazes had not done enough to rectify the problems that existed. The Committee felt that the only solution would be to resurface the courts. Finally a meeting with the Managing Director of Gazes confirmed that the court condition was terrible and it was agreed that repair to the drainage and resurfacing would be carried out.

The dispute over final payment for the Clubhouse extension continued.



Ladies Doubles Finalists

Winners Marion Newman & Sue Vine, Lynn Abbott & Deborah Tanner

1982

The Club was still in dispute with the building contractor of the pavilion extension, over settlement of the final payment. The LTA solicitors were consulted and the Club made offers of part payment. The one thing the Club did not want was a court case; the risks of losing outweighed the advantages of winning. Eventually due to the continued uncompromising approach adopted by the contractor's solicitor, the Club reluctantly decided that it would make sense to settle the claim in full.

To celebrate the Club's 50th year, an anniversary dance was held.

1983

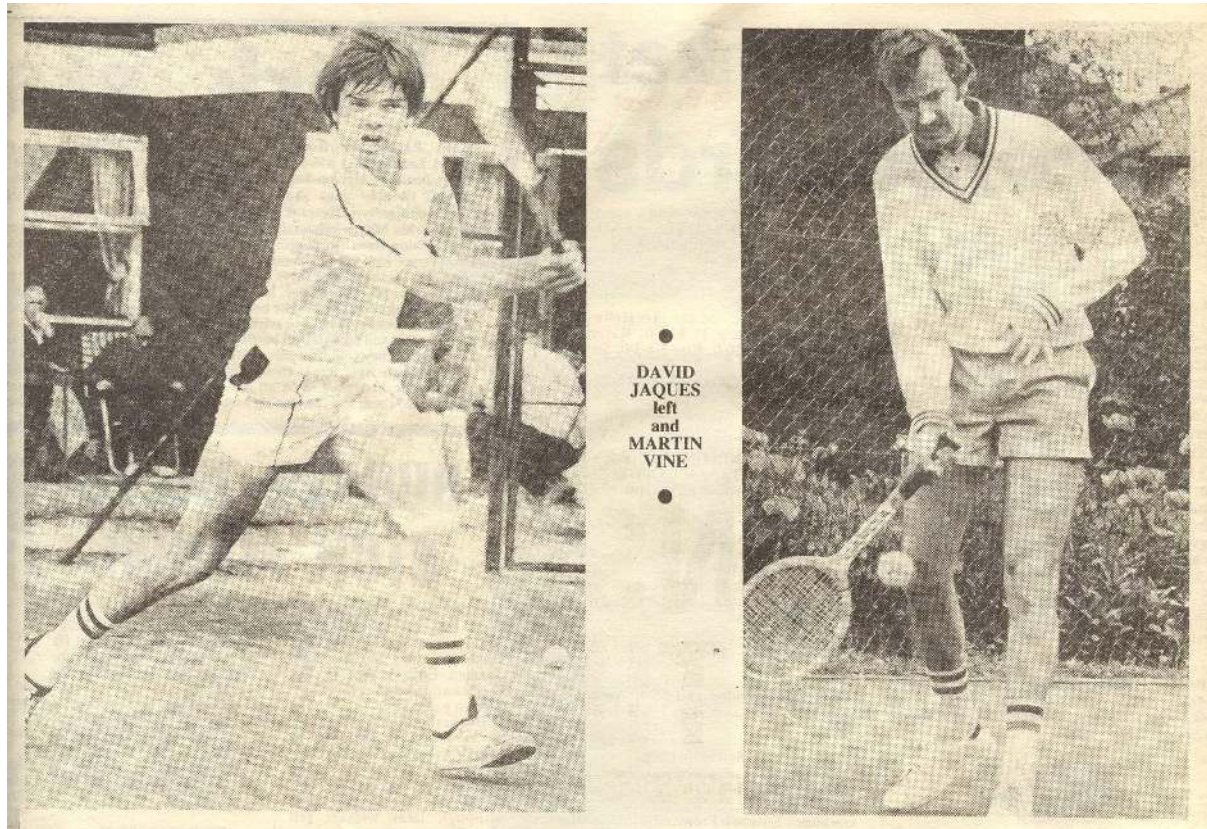
A social calendar included a number of the currently popular fondue evenings along with barbecues, French evening, dance evenings and Dinner Dance all becoming sell outs a month in advance.

The 'B' section was showing strength and entered a Mens team in the Romford & District Summer League, later entering two Mens and one Ladies team in the Romford & District Winter League.

Although still unhappy with the condition of the tarmac courts and in dispute with Gazes, the Club went ahead with a contract with Does to resurface courts 5 to 7. The cost of this work totalled £11400. Following completion, a period of exceptionally hot and dry weather ensued which caused surface problems with tackiness followed by cracking.

The dispute regarding the pavilion extension was finalised, although the amount had been settled, the Club had to pay costs in the region of £660. The LTA was generous to make a grant to the Club of £175 to cover the cost of the Club solicitors. The Clubhouse extension had been completed in May 1980, it had taken until this June for the affair to be settled.

A new fixture was added to the sporting calendar, this being an annual 'A' verses 'B' section cricket match with a trophy donated by members of the 'B' section.



Mens Singles Finalists

At the AGM members were unanimous that floodlighting of the courts was a priority for developing the Club, in view of this subscriptions were proposed from the members and agreed at £70, being an increase of 15% on top of that recommended by the Management Committee.

1984

A sub-committee was set up to look into the feasibility of providing floodlights. Following visits to other Clubs with various systems, the sub-committee recommended that planning permission be sought to provide floodlights using the Devo system. The quotation for floodlights on courts 5 & 6 was in the region of £13500+vat, but the cost of the project was being effected by the exchange rate of the US dollar against the pound, as the Devo system was American. The Club neighbours had been canvassed and even though there was a small pocket of resistance planning permission for the floodlights was received with the restriction of a 9.00pm curfew.

The venue for this year's Dinner Dance was Orsett Hall. The summer fete was again a success with a profit of around £1050 and the Club inherited various stalls no longer needed by St. Georges hospital.

There were changes to the playing arrangements with the introduction of Friday as an additional social playing night during the summer months.

The Table Tennis section received a boost in membership with the two former St. Leonards teams amalgamating with the Cranston Park teams. This enabled the Club to enter six teams in the Romford League for the forthcoming season.

The bar stock was given a much needed cool down with the installation of a cooling system for the bar store by Rayments brewery for which the Club received an interest free loan.

1985

The decision was taken to give preference to planning permission for an eighth court over the installation of floodlighting, due to the continuing weakness of sterling against the US dollar. This was granted later in the year.

For the first time the Club was host to an LTA Ratings Tournament. Pernod were the national sponsors of the event but there was also £250 cash sponsorship received from The Travel Club of Upminster. For this first event the grounds were home to three New Zealanders camping in an old Dormobile van at the end of the drive, one of them, Ruth Seeman, convincingly won the Ladies title.

The Essex Senior League started a Mens Singles competition into which the club entered a team. A near success this year was the Men finishing as runners-up in division 1 of the Essex Senior Doubles League.

The summer fete made an approximate profit of £1100. As in previous years St. Georges Hospital League of Friends were involved in making this event a success.



Howard McGuinness receives LTA Ratings trophy from Harry Chandler.

A Club member received national recognition, Mr R Ling represented Great Britain in the over 65 Britannia Cup Team competition.

It became apparent during the season that a request by the 'B' section for extra court time could not be met under the current arrangements. It was therefore agreed at the AGM to award equal playing

facilities to the 'B' section for equal subscriptions with the 'A' section. In consequence of this, members became full members of either 'A' or 'B' sections.

1986 - 1990

Then there was Light

1986

The Ratings Tournament previously sponsored by Pernod was to become The Volkswagon Tournament with again further sponsorship from The Travel Club of Upminster. The event had attracted a record entry but finals day attendance was disappointing.

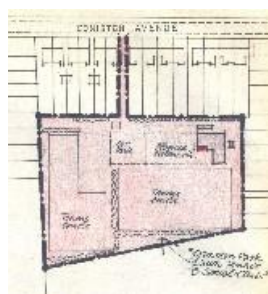
The keenness of the 'B' section was evident when they formed a sub-committee of 9 members. They had their own notice board for forthcoming events and a newsletter was being produced. In view of their equal playing facilities the 'B' section initiated their own internal competitions. The popularity of the 'B' section was evident from the Club membership figures of: 'A' section-61, 'B' section-60, Intermediates-14, Midweek-19, Juniors-120.

With a new Bar Secretary the year was to see the introduction of bar food together with a refurbished lounge. The bar area was extended and refurbished with new furniture and fabrics. The finance for this project came from the brewery in the form of a £7000 loan repayable over five years with no interest to pay provided the Club met certain barrelage turnover. By August the foundation work had been done with the building work completed by the end of September.

A new fete sub-committee was formed with the event turning out to be another success with a record profit of approximately £1170.

Court 8 was completed and quotations for the floodlighting scheme were obtained. Agreement was received from the LTA for a £5000 interest free loan over five years to finance the floodlighting. Cabling for the floodlighting went ahead with the ordering of the lighting system following at a cost of US\$14113 and delivery expected at the end of August.

It was not until November that the floodlights on courts 5 and 6 became operational. There was free use on Club nights. At other times bookings were taken up to ten days in advance on a first come first served basis, the 1½ hour sessions charged at a fee of £4 per session. These sessions were booked at the bar, when a token was issued, required to switch on the lights by a timed meter.



Layout of ground showing Bar Extension

Although the Club was moving forward with courts, lights and pavilion, not everything was in forward gear. In the Essex Senior Doubles League all four Mens teams had been relegated, being one of the most disappointing seasons on record. Subsequently entries for the following year saw a reduction to three Mens teams, with the continuation of two Mens veterans teams. In contrast the Mens singles team had won the singles title after only its second year in the competition.

The post of Match Secretary was introduced as a management committee position for the first time.

1987

There was an early year completion of the bar lounge refurbishment with new curtains, recovered benches and new furniture.

The annual ratings tournament was again held with sponsorship of £185 from Volkswagon and £250 from the Travel Club of Upminster. It rained a lot and play could only be made possible by Club stalwarts soaking up the puddles on the shale courts. The rain stopped in time for Howard McGuinness to take his third Mens title.

The kitchen received a facelift with the fitting of new units, new flooring and decoration.

The Grounds Secretary, who was co-ordinating the floodlighting project, was now seeking planning permission to floodlight courts 7 and 8 and extend the time limit to 10.00pm.



1988

After several years with the Dinner Dance being held at Furze Hill and the support for the event tending to dwindle, it was decided to try a new venue. West Lodge in Upminster was booked with a live band supplying the music.

Social functions saw the introduction of a trivial pursuits evening, with the old favourites of French night and barbecues still proving very popular. The summer fete was resurrected after a years break.

The Ladies were liberated. Mens team teas would not be provided by the lady members, it was down to the Mens captains to arrange their own refreshments.

We saw the end of 'Club and Grub' night on Wednesday evenings, as there was no response from an appeal for members to volunteer their services to keep this popular facility running.

The 'B' section members were becoming restless. With a decline in the numbers participating in coaching and more members wanting promotion to the 'A' section, a sub-committee was formed to investigate a possible amalgamation.

New licensing laws allowed the Club to apply for opening hours of 11am to 11pm Monday to Saturday.

Mr R Ling was given honorary membership of the Club. A presentation for all his contributions, both on and off the court, was made to him at the Annual Dinner Dance.

Table tennis was still very prominent with eight teams representing the Club, five in the Romford League and three in the Becontree League. The first team as always figured predominantly in division 1 of the Romford League. In the Becontree League the first team won division 1 and the Presidents Cup.

1989

With the post of Social Secretary becoming more difficult to fill, the title was changed to Social Co-ordinator, with the aim of getting members to organise individual events throughout the year. However this year one of the biggest profit making ventures, the summer fete, did not take place solely due to lack of a volunteer to run it.

Re-organisation of membership went ahead, merging 'A' and 'B' sections to operate a single category senior playing membership and creating an RAC (Restricted Adult Coaching) membership for senior beginners. 'B' section members were given the option of joining the combined 'A' and 'B' section or the newly created RAC section. The result of this re-organisation had an effect on social tennis. It was recognised that some members were not good enough to be in the main section but some players were not prepared to wait for more balanced games and social night organisers did not know the relative standards.

Floodlighting on courts 7 and 8, which had been approved and ordered in 1988, was installed and operated under the same system as courts 5 and 6. A £5000 loan from the LTA assisted the finance of this installation.

A newsletter titled 'Baseline' was published. Planned to be produced quarterly, only one issue was ever published.

Table tennis finished on a high note with Miss L Radford, aged 14, being selected to represent England in the Girls under17 team against South Korea.



The first and only issue of Baseline Newsletter

1990

There was a change to the management structure of the Committee. The day to day operation was being devolved to 13 sub-committees, as opposed to just 6 previously, reporting to the Management Committee. The Grounds Secretary position was split into Grounds and Pavilion. There were newly created positions of Tournament Secretary and Publicity Secretary. The post of Table Tennis Secretary was deleted from the Management Committee as technically table tennis players were not full playing members of the Club.

Mr M Vine stood down as Mens Captain after 21 years.

The teams in the Essex League were reduced to 2 Mens and 2 Ladies. To compensate, the Romford & District League entries were increased to 2 Mens and 2 Mixed teams.

Subscriptions increased to reflect the change to free usage of the floodlights, negating use of tokens and collection of money. There was however a representation of midweek members who objected to their £10 subscription increase as they only used the courts on two afternoons. There followed a request for hire of the courts at those times but the Committee decided that they could not be treated as a special case.

The Dinner Dance saw a visit to yet another venue, this time the Railway Hotel in Hornchurch.

The Finance and Planning Sub-Committee were looking at various options for replacement of the shale courts 1 to 4. The whole project was not simply a direct surface replacement but involved removal of the line of conifers between courts 4 and 5, reposition of all courts to obtain additional widths and lengths to comply with LTA recommended dimensions and the provision of additional paved areas. Apart from the court surface there was the question of finance for the whole project. The recommendation was for the impervious acrylic surface, which was favoured by the LTA.

In November the Club became a foster home for Upminster Hockey Club, with use of facilities on Saturday afternoons. This came about as a result of the hockey club premises in Upminster Park being burnt down in October.



The Club and grounds in October 1990

1991 - 1993

Farewell to Shale

1991

The AGM produced one of the very rare occasions where there were two nominations for one committee position, where members voted for the position of Membership Secretary. It was also necessary to consider the appointment of trustees, with the need once more to apply for finance in the way of loans.

Entries into the Essex League were increased, by reinstating a Mens 3 team and entering a Ladies veterans team. Additional Mens and Ladies teams were also entered in the Essex Cup.

Halmos had been chosen to provide the new courts, however there was a hitch in the proceedings as it became apparent that the Club had to obtain planning permission to move the tennis fences the nine feet required to suit the LTA requirements. This delayed the replacement from the winter, when there would have been very little disruption. The LTA approved a loan of £40000, over ten years interest free, to finance the replacement and following the planning approval the contractors started work in April. Work already carried out by members on working parties resulted in a renegotiated price of £76000 for the installation.



Work by Members enabled a renegotiated price

The courts were eventually completed in July. Installed with the side runs and runbacks to the LTA recommendations, paved areas for seating and with low level netting the new look courts totally transformed the playing conditions. The new acrylic courts were accepted on Saturday 20th July. The next morning, Sunday fixed fours, which have been part of club play for years, were playing on them.

The RAC was proving to be a good stepping stone to full membership with many players reaching the required standard each year. There were also people wishing to join with the result that the RAC membership limit was increased to 40. Along with the attraction of the new courts and an advertising campaign the membership grew to 108 Full Playing, 40 RAC, 9 Student, 16 Intermediates and 30 Midweek.

Just in time for the winter period, the Club received the agreement for the extension of floodlight hours for up to 9.30pm Monday to Saturday evenings. Initially two sessions were agreed, 6.30 to 8.00pm and 8.00 to 9.30pm.



Members on acrylic courts the next morning

The year was successful in all respects. There were good results from both Essex and Romford & District teams, a most successful year for bar profits, an excess of 200 members in the 200 group and a full and very well attended social calendar, culminating in the Dinner Dance which was held at The Cranleigh Banqueting Suite in Hornchurch.

1992

The Committee started the year with a new Secretary and an additional post of Minuting Secretary. For the second year running there was a member's vote, this time to choose the role of Publicity Officer.

The Club's Diamond Jubilee year celebrations were planned. A grand raffle was started in May with tickets sold throughout the summer period. August saw the Diamond Jubilee celebration with a tournament followed by a cheese and wine evening where former members were invited. A Jubilee cake was made for the occasion.

With an influx of new members to the main section there became the increasing desire to play in teams. To solve this need a Mens 4 and Ladies Singles team were entered in the Essex League and a Ladies team entered in the Romford & District League.

Another attempt to produce a newsletter was made, initially suggested as 'Tennis Tatler', the new publication was produced in March titled 'Net-Cord News'.

What was previously known as the summer fete, went ahead as the 'Family Fun Day'. In spite of an appallingly wet day a profit of approximately £600 was made.



Diamond Jubilee cake

1993

The post of Chairman became a committee position in its own right to be voted for at the AGM, previously being selected from within the Committee at their first meeting.

An additional Ladies veterans team was entered in the Essex League.

Members were given the opportunity to purchase sweatshirts and polo shirts embroidered with the new Club logo which was produced in the new colours of light and dark green and purple. This proved a popular idea with the first order for 80 items. The change of the logo and colours, which were previously orange and black, were an attempt to update the Club's image.

There have been a few strange ideas proposed over the years. One that the Committee decided did not warrant further discussion was the request to install a 'Steam and Health Spa Studio' in the form of a log cabin style building at the rear of the pavilion.

Improvement of the clubhouse, including plans for an extension, was started with the installation of a sports/dance quality floor in the main hall. This was implemented in order to improve revenue earnings and soon attracted interest for use as an aerobics venue. The planning approval for the extension however was not immediately forthcoming, therefore delaying any planned start this year. The funding for some of these improvements came from a brewery loan of £18000.

The annual ratings tournament was run for the eighth and final year under the sponsorship of Volkswagon, the only continuous support of the event, from 1985, being The Travel Club of Upminster.

1994 - 1999

A Rocket has Landed

1994

The security of the Club was considered following a few burglaries on the premises. The outcome was the installation of an alarm system and heavier security for the bar area.

The RAC section had served its purpose by boosting the numbers within the full-playing section; therefore this season would be its last. These members now required the use of prime court time and were given the option of being assessed for full playing membership immediately or at the end of the season.

On the playing side, due to lack of ladies wanting to play singles the team was withdrawn from the Essex Ladies Singles League. There was however an increasing number of men reaching the grand age of 45 to warrant the entry of a 3rd Mens veterans team in the Essex League.

This was the first year the Ratings Tournament was run without any national sponsorship, only from The Travel Club of Upminster. Without doubt the most bizarre and most colourful player ever to turn up for this event was Bryan Turton, a tall, shaven headed Australian. He had apparently convinced the LTA that he was a player of the highest class. He turned up at the Club carrying only a plastic bag which contained some bread, butter and cheese; apparently his rackets were all being strung! He was dressed in baseball clothes and had no money. As security he handed the tournament referee his passport in which was a picture of Steffi Graf stuck to one of the pages. His apparent credentials put him into the semi-final for which he arrived on the Sunday morning with one arm and one leg clad in a black stocking, he still didn't have a racket. He borrowed a racket from his opponents little sister. He lost a disputed match and left the premises, later to be seen walking barefoot through Upminster. The whole day was most entertaining.

An interesting item put under the heading of 'New Club Equipment', took members by surprise when it appeared at the Club. The item was a piece of children's play apparatus, in the form of a rocket, which had been temporarily installed behind the clubhouse. The rocket was acquired from a council playground which was being demolished. The intention by the acquirer was that the Club could use such a piece of equipment to keep children amused while their parents were playing tennis. After some discussion the Committee voted against having a playground at the Club and requested removal of the rocket.

The short term storage problem was solved with the acquisition of a 3metre x 2metre steel gas governor, purchased for a nominal sum from British Gas. This was installed on a concrete base behind the Clubhouse.

Plans submitted showing proposed Childrens Play Area

1995

The RAC section closed on 1st April after 6 years. All members were notified of this intention and during March were considered for full membership. Following assessment there remained 8 members who were not accepted into the main section. They were given the name tag of Improvers with the opportunity to make the required standard within the year.

There was an increase in numbers of the junior section. The ever increasing work involved to run this section prompted the formation of a junior sub-committee to relieve the Junior Secretary of some of this work.

In March the Club looked like a construction site when Halmo Sports Ltd started work on the replacement of tarmac courts 5 to 8. The replacement involved the breaking up of the existing surface and laying new base stone and limestone foundation to a depth around 200mm. Ducting was laid through the centre of the courts with draw wires, in readiness for the installation of future floodlighting. With the new base course of macadam, new tubular fencing enclosure and Desso Sportilan synthetic grass, partly financed by a loan of £30000 from the LTA, the whole project was to cost in the region of £87000.



Courts 5 to 8 replaced with synthetic grass

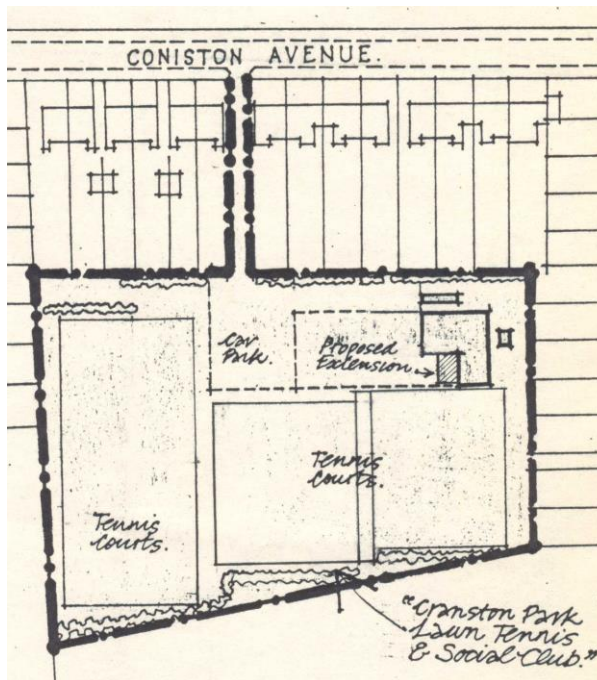
The construction site remained with materials being delivered for the pavilion extension which was started in April. The building was completed in May providing a new entrance lobby, lounge area with opening doors to a patio area and folding doors to the main hall. The cost of this project had risen to around £32000, which was mainly due to the change of materials from timber to brick.

Following the completion of the clubhouse extension, carpet tiles were provided and fitted at no cost and chairs acquired for £140. A pool table was installed, which in the first five weeks made £250 from its use.

With the clubhouse building extension and court replacement projects completed, a grand opening event was held, instead of the annual fete, with an American tournament, stalls, barbeque, table tennis and pool tournament followed by an evening disco.

A Coaching Sub-Committee was formed to look at the existing coaching arrangements and the coaching requirements of members. The findings and recommendations eventually lead to a complete change in the coaching arrangements and financing with all courses coming under the control of the Club. Towards the end of the year a Coaching Co-ordinator was appointed.

The winter season saw the start of the Essex Winter League into which the Club entered three Mens and two Ladies teams.



1996

It took until March for the remaining 8 members of the old RAC section, who had been playing under the Improvers category, to be invited to join the full playing section.

The next major project to consider was to update the floodlighting system on courts 5 to 8, for which planning application was sought. Letters were sent to residents who surrounded the Club with a view to disperse any fears they may have prior to notice of the planning application. Committee members with council planners visited Cranbrook Castle Tennis Club with the view of proving that the lighting system would cause no problem to residents. The lighting system chosen was manufactured by RLS Lighting Inc. and would eradicate any upward lighting and restrict light spillage below. The only stipulation was that the height of the lights would be no greater than 6.5 metres. Planning permission was received towards the end of the year, which included installation for courts 3 and 4.

Following the coaching re-organisation, the vacant position of Club Coach was filled by Mr N Walker. His previous position had been at Gidea Park Tennis Club and his appointment was taken up in September.

1997

The Committee took on a new look with around nine changes. The membership of the Club probably hit its peak figure of 184 full playing members. At the same time the junior membership was forever growing and was increased to 153 but there was still a waiting list of around 60.

The Mens Captain recorded that in all his years at the Club he could not recall there being such a successful season for the Mens teams, with all four teams winning their respective divisions in the Essex League and the Mens Singles team also winning their division. The Mens 2nd team also won the Essex Junior Cup Division 2. Not to be outdone the Ladies 2nd team won the Essex Junior Cup, a feat last accomplished 33 years ago. The Ladies Veterans were also winners of division 1.

As always when someone new steps into a role, the initial enthusiasm creates plenty of activity. This was the case with the social functions which included a valentines disco, trivial pursuit, quiz evening, barbecues, Indian and Italian evenings and once again the fun day which over the years had various names, such as 'Garden Party', 'Summer Fete', 'Grand Opening' (if there was something to open), but all ending up with one outcome, being everyone enjoying themselves.



Mens Singles finalists David Jaques and Neil Walker

1998

The lighting on courts 5 to 8 had become very poor with several strip lamps failing. The delay on the replacement of the lighting system was awaiting the result of a National Lottery application.

Eventually the Club received £15000 from the lottery so replacement of lighting on courts 5 to 8 and additional lighting to courts 3 and 4 were completed. An official opening event was held in October.

A long serving member, life member and former auditor, Mr A Filkins, died in May. Alan's Sunday morning ritual was playing social tennis with his Dunlop Maxply racket, long after wooden rackets had gone out of fashion, followed by newspaper, pipe and a few pints, comfortably positioned in his deckchair which he brought to the Club each week in his car.



Alan Filkins in his Sunday morning pose

Mr K Stephens officiated his last Ratings Tournament as referee. Having organised the event for the past 14 years, he felt the event needed an injection of new life. The event started as the 'Pernod

Ratings Tournament' in 1985, in 1986 changing sponsors to 'Volkswagen' until 1993. 'The Travel Club of Upminster' had been sponsors from 1985 but from 1994 had been the sole sponsors of the event.

The table tennis members would become more a part of the Club, as currently only each team paid a subscription to cover affiliation fees. Each player would be a Club member, with a representative officiating on the Committee; hence the position of Table Tennis Secretary was re-appointed.



Caricature of Keith Stephens

1999

A goodwill gesture was offered to Grosvenor Tennis Club providing the facility to join our members for social playing times during the period that their courts and floodlights were being installed. This offer was gratefully accepted.

The Club received news of the death of Mr J Saw, who had emigrated to Canada. A former social and life member, John had been the Bar Secretary from 1986 to 1993. The Club was like a second home to John and his dog, 'Lady'.



2000 - 2003

Management Unrest

2000

The new millennium saw more than a third of the committee posts vacated, although some members were just changing roles. This was going to be quite an eventful year.

Following a quiet year for spending, the next round of projects was instigated. There were plans for the complete refurbishment of the changing rooms with an initial estimated cost of £12000 along with proposals to resurface courts 3 and 4 in synthetic grass at a cost of around £33000+vat. April saw the start of the refurbishment programme on the changing rooms.

A committee discussed new playing arrangements and members were canvassed through a questionnaire. A report recommended the introduction of a social league, team practice sessions and some changes to existing court allocations. The recommendations were accepted by the Management Committee; however there was still some dissatisfaction. Following publication of the recommendations to members, there was a petition for an Extraordinary General Meeting. The outcome of this challenge was that the majority of proposals were withdrawn resulting in the threat of an EGM being dissolved. The knock on effect was the resignation of the Mens Captain and Chairman, which probably goes down on record as the shortest reign for a Chairman, being just over three months.

The Community Tennis Partnership was introduced in the form of a business plan. This involved a joint venture in conjunction with Coopers Coburn School, who were seeking sports college status, and Havering to develop and promote tennis within the borough. Funding was made available from the LTA.

Refurbishment of the changing rooms progressed slowly through the year with new partition walls, shower units completely retiled, new showers and wash hand basins replaced. The lighting and power was rewired with heaters, hand dryers and hair dryers fitted. Apart from the tiling all of the work was undertaken by club members.

The Club website was launched with the domain name www.cranstonpark.co.uk.



Part of the changing room refurbishment

2001

An even bigger turnover of committee members this year with as many vacant positions following the AGM, as there were filled. However these vacancies were filled early in the year.

Social events had a difficult time. Several had to be cancelled due to lack of support; others went ahead with less than the expected attendance, as payment to secure performers had been made. One successful new event was a May Ball held in the grounds, with dining and dancing in a marquee. Subsequently the Dinner Dance was not held in favour of a Christmas party at the Club.

The acrylic courts 3 and 4 were dug up and resurfaced with synthetic grass. This now gave the Club six synthetic grass courts, all floodlit.

The junior section had a most rewarding season with five teams in the Chelmsford Junior Tennis League winning their divisions and the remaining three teams as runners up.



Replacement of courts 3 and 4

2002

The subject of smoking in the clubhouse had been raised many times so a ballot of members was carried out to decide on the policy to be adopted. The result left the smoking policy as existed, being that smoking was only allowed in the bar lounge but not allowed at the bar counter. In all other areas of the clubhouse there was no smoking.

Roof repairs which included new fanlight fittings allowed the decoration of the changing rooms to be completed. Decoration of the bar lounge followed along with fitting of a new carpet.

The social scene celebrated the Queen's Golden Jubilee with an event in the grounds and the Dinner Dance returned to the Cranleigh Banqueting Suite after only one years absence.

The junior section repeated the success of the previous year winning five trophies out of a possible eight at the Chelmsford Junior Tennis League finals.



Preparations for the Queen's Golden Jubilee event

2003

The committee welcomed a new Chairman and the formation of a hierarchy of three sub-committees, Administration, Playing and Finance, each reporting to an Executive Committee. This would allow each of the sub-committees to spend more time on their own objectives.

A new coach, Mr N Twitchett, was appointed as Development Officer for the LTA driven Community Tennis Partnership, a joint venture with Coopers Coborn School and the London Borough of Havering to develop links with schools and the local community.

The Ladies 1st team reached the final of the Essex Senior Cup for the first time in the Club's history, losing to a strong Woodford Wells team.

A presentation was made to the longest serving and currently playing member, Mr R Stainer, in acknowledgement of his 50 years membership of the Club.



Neil Twitchett, appointed Development Officer

2004 - 2007

No Smoke without Fire

2004

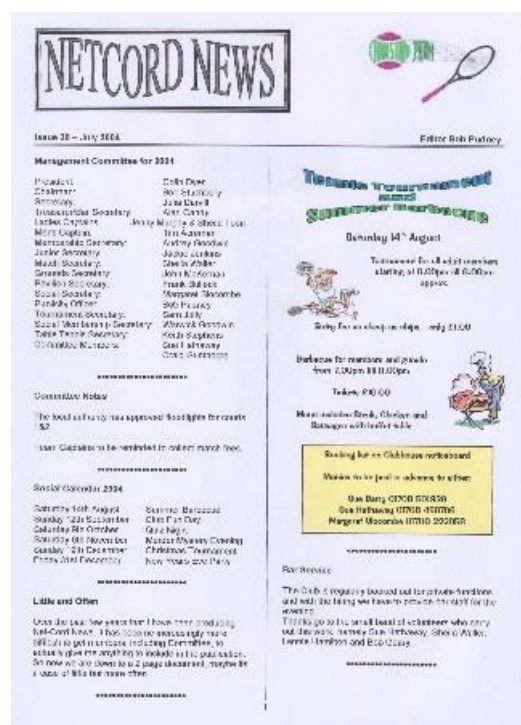
Once again, as in 2002, the subject of smoking was an issue, finally it was decided by membership ballot, with a result of 127 to 60, that a no smoking policy should be adopted throughout the Club. As from 1st April this change was adopted.

Membership had been dropping over the past few years therefore an effort was made to attract new members. There were posters distributed and a mail shot covering the local area with invitations to a summer open evening.

For the second year in succession the Ladies 1st team reached the final of the Essex Senior Cup, this time to be beaten by Westcliff Lawn.

In July, issue 30 of 'Net-Cord News' became the last. The newsletter was first published in 1992 and articles for publication in the latter years became scarce. There were several changes of layout and editor over the years, but it had served a purpose, which was now hoped to be catered for by the Club website.

The Finance Committee drew up spending plans for future development, namely, the installation of floodlights on courts 1 and 2 for which local authority planning permission had been approved, upgrading of the existing courts, pruning of conifers, the provision of an additional storage facility at the rear of the clubhouse and resurfacing of the car park area.



2005

In an effort to streamline management, further changes were implemented to the structure of the Committee. It was thought to be too large with too much time spent discussing issues that could be handled by working committees.

Once again the juniors had another successful season in the Chelmsford League with five teams competing in the finals. In the National Club League the Girls U12 and U18 teams were County champions with the U12 team going on to reach the regional final.

2006

With a full complement of committee members and with sub-committees given the authority to seek approval for various projects, although within constraints of a budget, much was achieved.

The clubhouse benefited from a spruce up of the bar lounge with removal of the smoke extractor fan and a fresh ceiling. This was followed with a revamp of the lounge with new blinds, notice boards, trophy cabinet, television and decoration. The Club website was redesigned and a new handbook produced.

There was a major refurbishment on courts 5 to 8, with new synthetic grass and replacement of nets and posts. The conifers surrounding the courts were pruned which with the renewal of the floodlight lamps made for a better playing experience.

The social calendar gained more support with the reappearance of some old favourites, namely an Indian night, a soul night, summer barbecue and the return to the Cranleigh for the Dinner Dance.

The Club achieved county accreditation within the LTA's Club Performance Programme. Benefits were a grant of £4000 from Essex LTA awarded for 12 months and reviewed based on results of the juniors selected to join the programme.

2007

The Club becomes 75 years old on the 5th August this year.

The next major project should involve acrylic courts 1 and 2. Options are being discussed with the LTA but much will depend on the availability of grants or loans.