



KENILWORTH TENNIS, SQUASH
& CROQUET CLUB

1901 - 2023





Celebrating our Diamond Jubilee at Crackley Lane

Foreword

Welcome to our club history, compiled to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the opening of the clubhouse in Crackley Lane.

In the cellar of the club are thousands of documents which chart our 122-year journey from the days when a donkey cut the grass at the original site in Queens Road. The club eventually moved to Crackley Lane and the clubhouse opened in 1963, heralding a new era of sporting activity and continued development of our wonderful facilities. Sixty years on, tennis, squash, racketball, croquet, padel and a thriving bar are enjoyed by 700 members.

Committees have met almost every month over the decades, with minutes kept meticulously on paper and in digital form. Thanks to this, we have been able to produce a comprehensive record of our triumphs and disasters over the years.

However, history is as much about people as events and the club is a place where lifelong friendships are formed, on and off the courts and lawns. Woven into the chronology are members' personal memories, anecdotes, letters and photographs, shared willingly by everyone who has played a part in making our club what it is today.

We thank you all for your valuable contributions and hope you enjoy a trip down memory lane.

Chapter One

1901-1963

1900s

It all started in 1901 when the population of Kenilworth was 4,500.

At meetings held in **July 1901** it was proposed that:

- the club be called Kenilworth Lawn Tennis and Badminton Club
- the club be sited in Queens Road and £5 be paid for the pavilion
- Expenditure included: 10/- (10 shillings) for three seats; 25/- (25 shillings) for a tent and 7/6 (7 shillings and sixpence) be paid for a hose, spade and turf cutter.

Lord Leigh was elected President and committees covered Ground, Lawn Tennis, Badminton, Hockey and Croquet and Bowls.

Mr Lancaster was employed to 'get the ground in order' – at the sum of a guinea (£1 and 1 shilling) a week.

By early 1902 a sub-committee was formed to provide a ladies' pavilion and to arrange for repairs to the men's pavilion. That summer saw a badminton tournament, a bowling competition and a three-day tennis tournament – balls to be supplied by the players.

In September 1903 it was decided that a donkey be provided at the rate of 1/6 (one shilling and sixpence) a week, presumably to keep the grass short. In 1908 it was agreed that a new donkey be obtained at the expenditure of £3 and the 'old donkey be sent to kennels at the end of the summer or, failing that, be shot and buried on the field.' In 1911, the new donkey was still clearly in use as a cheque to the value of £3 was passed to Mr G A Winstanley to keep the club donkey for four years. In 1929 a veterinary surgeon's report showed the donkey was in good condition and quite fit to continue though of advanced age.



The following year club finances were such that it was agreed the club would provide the balls for matches and a two guinea (£2 and 2 shillings) prize was given for the ladies' singles.

It was decided to provide a second croquet lawn – with a third being added in **1906**.

In 1908 a yearly subscription of 10s/6d was introduced for young people aged 6-14.

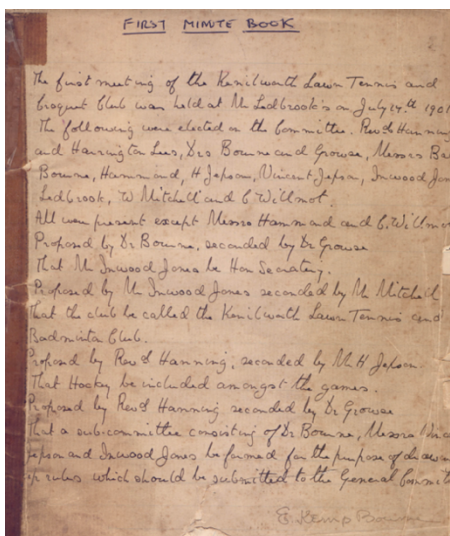
1909 saw the purchase of a dozen chairs and two pairs of umpire seats. Work began on levelling the 5th tennis court and seeding of the first three courts.

1910s

In 1910 the club employed two boys at 1s/6d per day to weed the 6th court. The following year, nitrate soda and worm killer were bought to treat the courts.

In 1914 the original lease at Queens Road expired so the grounds were taken on an annual lease.

Over the First World War, the future of the tennis club was debated heavily – probably due to increasing costs and dropping income.



The first handwritten minutes book of the club, started after a meeting at Mr Ledbrook's.

In 1918 the club secretary was asked to approach someone who might 'plough up a portion of the tennis field to grow potatoes etc. thereon'.

In 1919 a woman was employed to clean the ladies' pavilion.

1920s

In 1920 a groundsman was instructed to weed the five tennis courts and the dandelions on the croquet lawns for a sum not exceeding £6. A playing pitch for Mr Spencer's school was arranged between the ends of the 4th and 5th courts – however it was noted that 'this restricted play on the croquet lawn at times'.

1921 saw the introduction of Stones Ginger Beer and Lemonade at the price of 3d (3 pence) a bottle. The tennis committee 'did not see a way to join the Warwickshire County Lawn Tennis Association this season'.

In 1923 the committee 'expect the proposer and seconder of a nomination of a new member be both personally acquainted with such candidate'. The lady members asked to purchase a looking glass, some tea cloths and two knives. A county match between Warwickshire and Staffordshire was held and in **1924** tennis matches were in full swing with teams playing Beauchamp Gardens, Milverton, Knowle, Stratford, Warwick Boat Club and Earlsdon.

In May 1924 a special meeting was held at which the Kenilworth Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club was wound up and all its assets transferred to Kenilworth Lawn Tennis Club Ltd to enable the club to raise funds through the issue of debentures.

1925 saw the price of a cup of tea at the club fixed at 6d (six pence).

1926 saw the committee consider the purchase of a motor mower, later bought for 62 guineas.



In 1928 estimates were obtained for a new pavilion.

1930s

1932 A county match, Warwickshire v Worcestershire, was played at the club ground.

1933 The President presented 'handsome cups' for competitions.

In 1934 the grounds committee recommended that a 'turf nursery' be set up.



1935 witnessed the introduction of a coin telephone box at the cost of £8 10 shillings per annum. A resolution was also passed to have four hard courts on the basis of a costing from En-Tout-Cas of £425 with levelling and water works.

1936 minutes noted the position of the ladies' team in the County League table, 'namely 2nd place in Division 1 with 10 points, beaten only by Priory Club'. On Saturday 4th April the hard courts were opened with an exhibition match played.

1949

In April 1949 the committee agreed 'that a list of members who have not paid their subscription be put up in the pavilion in **Red Ink**' – at a subsequent meeting it was noted this action had not in fact been agreed.

A 'Berkeley Memorial Cup' was established for an annual mixed doubles tournament and it was proposed that after matches, used tennis balls would be on sale in the pavilion.

There were complaints concerning 'the condition of the centre nets – it was agreed to purchase double topped nets.... and also centre fittings.'

The President also received complaints about the 'rather delicate subject' of members arriving in made-up fours at the weekend and hoped that the club spirit was not departing.

Also in this year 'it was proposed that if the committee considered it practicable, the club should apply for a licence to sell intoxicant. This was put to the vote and was defeated.'

On the plus side, the President applied for Wimbledon tickets for members and electricity was installed in the pavilion.

After long discussions about the acquisition of a ping-pong table, a helpful Mrs Page offered to lend one to the club.

1950s

At the **1950** AGM it was noted, 'it might be possible in the near future to overcome the loss on the sale of orange and lemon squash as a suitable machine might be on the market.'

Mr Sutton stated that the Club was overdrawn at the bank by nearly £300.

In 1951 it was suggested that as so many junior members were now at the club they should have their own committee, with one member on the main committee. Coaches were also being sought due to demand from members keen to hone their skills. It was proposed that two vice-captains joined the captains in the running of the teams.

In 1952 subscriptions for the 133 members (12 non-playing) were: full membership £4 and 4 shillings; summer membership £3 13 shillings and 6 pence; junior members £1 and 1 shilling.

This year also saw a 'sold out' club dance at the Regent Hotel (Leamington) in December. This, along with the Bonfire Party, became (profitable) regular fixtures in the Club calendar.

1953 saw the formation of a junior social committee and a 'Flannel Dance' at the Abbey Hotel.

The club disposed of the old pavilion to Messrs Jaguar Cars for £250. Tournaments were in full swing including club championships with men's and ladies' doubles to be included this year. All information was displayed in the pavilion with a reminder that 'whites' should be worn in summer.

1954 saw the club apply to sell and consume alcoholic liquor and a bar committee was formed. Courts were used for the county men's doubles finals – the club made 14 shillings on the teas.

An interesting note in the minutes that year stated: 'Several ladies of the club had complained about the inadequate space in the ladies' changing room and asked if a changeover of rooms could be made with the men. However, this was felt to be no solution as the men would therefore suffer in a similar manner.' There was also a complaint that when the door of the changing room opened suddenly, a certain amount of embarrassment could be caused. It was agreed the door should be changed.

It was agreed to provide match results to the Kenilworth Weekly News.

The club had only received 12 tickets for the Wimbledon fortnight – a vast reduction on previous years – so a letter of complaint was written to the Warwickshire LTA enquiring the reason for this.

Prospective new members were still being vetted on the basis of tennis ability. In the membership update, it was reported that 'Mr C had been given a trial game and that the opinion of the member giving him the trial was that Mr C's standard was not up to that required by the club.' It was suggested he re-apply the following year!

The coaching by Lt. Col. Cosens (an LTA professional) on Saturday afternoons had been a success.

In March 1955 it was reported that the courts were in a very bad state because of frost.

A 'National Service' membership category was introduced.

Discussions opened over the sale of some of the club land to a housebuilder to pay for a new car park, moving and extending the clubhouse and possibly building a new hard court or a squash court.

The idea of a club tie with an embroidered design was discussed and the bar was now up and running at a profit – and proving popular with members. Keg bitter followed shortly.



Players by the pavilion in 1955.

In 1956 tennis balls were still being provided by the club for play – but there was discussion over charging an additional levy to go into a tennis ball fund. Membership stood at 170 and annual subscriptions had gone up only 1 guinea (£1 and 1 shilling) since 1936!

In 1957 Money from the sale of land at the front was earmarked for new courts – but should they be grass or hard? An EGM in the October settled for two grass. At its height, the club had nine courts.

A new Social (re-named Activities) Committee ran a successful car treasure hunt. However, the Punt Party in August that year appeared to be less successful:

'Mrs B reported that she had been in the smart boat, that the weather had been poor, that it had been dark, that bawdy songs had been sung and that certain members had become stagnant.' Visitations from cows and a lost umbrella were also reported.

In 1958 thanks were recorded to those who competed in a successful previous season and to the ladies for providing excellent teas. Such was the enthusiasm that match practice was introduced.

In July it was reported that the new courts were not ready – due to the part-time groundsman being ill and the weather. Members had sought to help but had suffered 'indisposition' as a result.

Responding to occasional criticism, the secretary noted, 'a thing should be judged on its good points rather than its bad' and he hoped such criticism would be short-lived and squashed where necessary.

A wicked sense of humour pervaded the decades, as evidenced from a committee meeting of 1958:

'Mr R informed the meeting that Mr E had offered his services to all members interested in undergoing weightlifting as an aspect of tennis training.

After the general hilarity had subsided, the meeting asked Mr R to convey to Mr E the blessing of the committee and that a suitably inscribed notice of such a course of instruction would be displayed. The proposition gave cause for queries:

- Was 'Professor Atlas' (Mr E) qualified to instruct in such delicate tuition, especially in view of his cannon-ball service (serve) – viz. the one that reached the net?
- Were members to provide their own weights or was there to be a weight levy?
- Would it be advisable for the Pavilion Structural Committee to give way?
- Were we fully covered from the insurance angle? (Yes).
- Were leopard skin shorts to be worn and should we bring our own black belts?

- It was thought advisable for such exercises to take place in the car park and that we could all have a body like the Professor's – if we weren't careful!

Mr B collapsed with hysterics, and the secretary said he felt quite ill; Mr G couldn't speak at all, and the subject was dropped.'

1961-1963: to pastures new

For some time, there had been talk of extending the pavilion and making other improvements to attract new blood, but member and architect Paul Beney thought better. In a bold move, it was agreed that the club would move to a former quarry site at Crackley Lane. So, in **1961**, the club's Diamond Jubilee Year, the Queens Road site was bought at auction by Bryant Homes for £23,500 with outline planning permission for new homes, granted by Kenilworth Urban Council. Players continued to use Queens Road until the end of **1961** when they dismantled the pavilion and nets.



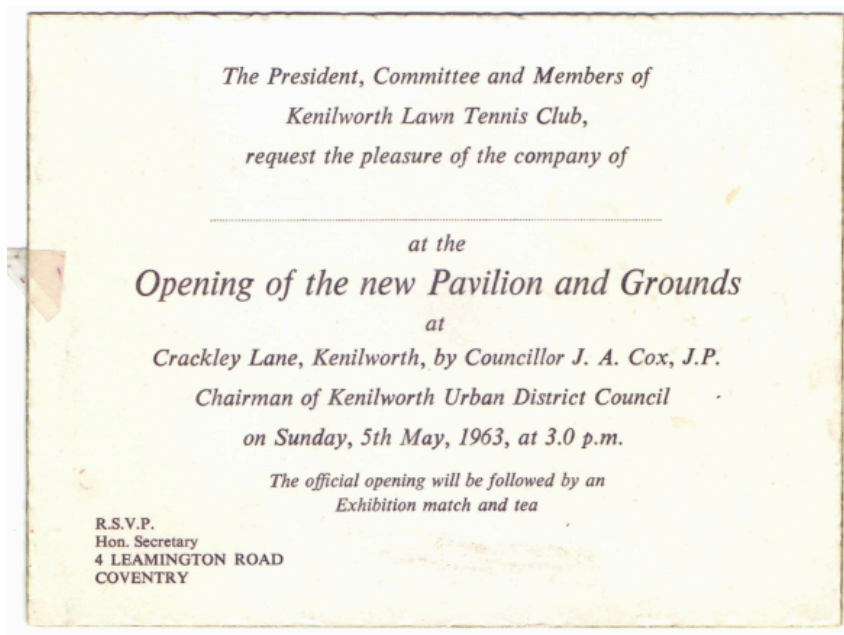
These pictures show the land being prepared for courts and a clubhouse at Crackley Lane.

The new site at Crackley, costing £21,000, would initially have ten courts - four shale, five grass (later six) and one all-weather. Secretary Peter Wartnaby insisted, "We want to keep the club atmosphere."

By 1962, two shale courts were ready for use and on **5th May, 1963**, the pavilion, smaller than today's, was officially opened. The highlight was an

exhibition match featuring Alan Mills (GB), John McDonald (New Zealand), Warren Jacques (Australia) and Dave Phillips (South Africa). The comments of Councillor Cox (Mayor of Kenilworth), still resonate today:

"The successful setting up and development of amateur sports clubs is not an easy matter and no organisation such as your club could possibly have expected to reach the present successful and well-established position without much hard work, enthusiasm and loyal support from its members, as well as wise management. The history of the club in these matters speaks for itself."



Chapter Two

1964-1969

Following the official opening of the new pavilion at Crackley, designed by member and architect Paul Beney, Kenilworth quickly established itself as one of the leading clubs in Warwickshire. Within months however, members were planning another bold venture - the addition of squash courts to attract new members and income streams to secure the club's long-term future.

1964

Membership rose from 215 to 332 as players flocked to the grass and shale courts in an exceptional summer. A report noted that there was a 'considerable improvement in the standard of play.'

A name tag rota board, using players' full names (surnames were later dropped to enhance 'friendliness') was used at club sessions to enable everyone to take their turn and to ensure balanced fours. Balls were provided free on condition players returned them to a box.

This mixed doubles trophy was awarded in the 1960s and used until engraving space ran out in 2004.



Club tournaments were 'held within restricted periods with a definite finals day' and two 'handsome cups' were presented for the men's and ladies' handicap doubles. Later in the decade, a trophy was donated for the level mixed doubles. Teams did not yet participate in the Coventry and District Lawn Tennis League, opting instead for friendly matches.

A 'kiddies corner' with a swing and slide was created to keep the little ones occupied. 'It is very nice to see the children being brought up in the right atmosphere,' according to the general secretary.

The new pavilion offered ample opportunities for social events but demand for tickets for a new-look dinner dance 'to replace the curried prawns' was so high - 152 tickets were sold - that it was held at the Manor Hotel in Meriden.

The courts also had their limitations. Flooding problems on the grass were partly resolved by the laying of a new drain between the grass and shale courts but in winter, the grass was out of action, meaning that 'we have a handsome pavilion but the courts are rarely fully occupied.'

Consequently, the committee recognised that 'the bar, changing rooms and showers are lying idle for four to five months and this is obviously not the most satisfactory state of affairs.' A sub-committee was therefore formed to look at the building of squash courts.

Neighbour Miss Martin, who owned the land behind the pavilion, supported the scheme and plans were submitted. A report to members stated, 'At present, there are no squash courts in Kenilworth and relatively few in the surrounding neighbourhood. The game is very popular, can be played all the year round and it is felt that the courts - requiring virtually no upkeep - would attract a considerable number of new members.'

1965

Members had a ball, on and off the court. The pavilion floor was designed to withstand many a dance so the Swinging Sixties saw a varied programme of events.

In 1965, the line-up included a car treasure hunt, cheese and wine party, three nights with a local band called the Barry Jons Five, the finals

supper, a sherry party, a 'nosh-up' fireworks evening and a Christmas party. The annual dinner dance in Meriden featured roast Scotch beef for the 34-shilling tickets.



Darts and bar billiards were popular; Wednesday ping pong nights had also taken off, with the committee assuring members that 'proper legs' would be made for the club table tennis table.

With all the comings and goings, the key to the main door was lost and eventually turned up at the police station.

On court, along with the senior club tournaments in June and August and the junior event in September, the club organised the first one-day Open American Tournament with entries accepted from pairs far and wide. This ran for more than 25 years.

The policy of only accepting new members via a 'playing-in test' was strictly maintained. Successful applicants were listed in the minutes, as were players who were 'struck off' through non-payment.

In June, a motion for the formation of a junior committee was enthusiastically received and the youngsters set about organising their own dance (soft drinks only).

Throughout the year, elaborate teas were served on Sundays after club play. There was a tacit understanding that as the men, with a groundsman, generally looked after the grounds, the ladies would make the cakes - and all the match suppers.

After tea, the bar, staffed in those days by a rota of club members, was crammed by players who repeatedly left it in an 'untidy state with 30 or 40 glasses for someone else to wash up.'

Plans for squash courts 'were not prospering as well as hoped' due to difficulties obtaining grants.

However, more than 300 tennis clubs had disaffiliated from the LTA and it was reported that 'all tennis clubs are struggling to survive' due to the challenges with grass courts and the economy.

The grounds committee faced a constant battle to maintain the courts: the grass required scarifying, re-seeding, top-dressing and turf replacement and frost damage was reported on two shale courts. Two Birmingham clubs beat Kenilworth to grants for an indoor court and members were told, 'it is always worthwhile trying innovations of any kind.'

1966

Attempts to fill the coffers were reported thus: 'We tried this year to have a Thursday club evening but perhaps tennis playing members are not of the beer-swilling fraternity necessary for swelling the bar profits or putting sixpences in fruit machines.

We must be the only club in the country that can boast that we made a loss on the fruit machine.'

Thursday evenings were therefore given to juniors in addition to their Fridays; they also played matches on Mondays and were allowed to join seniors for social play.



Numerous local organisations requested use of the club's enviable facilities for meetings and events. Among those turned down were the Dog Training Club (use of courts) and Kenilworth Historical Society (a 'scheme' to commemorate the Great Siege of Kenilworth).

With the bar 'deserted' on winter evenings and drainage problems once again plaguing the courts, detailed costings were sought for two squash courts. The likely total was £10,000 and members would be consulted as to whether they wished to top up any grants with personal donations.

Along with the main committee, there were sub-committees for grounds, finance, social - which had eight members - the bar, juniors, new members, house and pavilion.

Senior matches continued to be friendly, non-league affairs. The men won 10 out of 15 matches, the ladies four out of six and the mixed four out of 10, with 19 men and 16 ladies participating.

Ladies were thanked for the catering but 'reminded to follow the rules of playing attire.'

Subscription rates for 1966.

Election of Auditor. Messrs. Kirby Smale & Co. Chartered Accountants, were elected Auditors under the provisions of Section 159 of the Companies Act 1948.

Subscriptions. A proposition, which had already been notified to the members, was put by the Honorary Treasurer that the Annual Subscriptions should be increased as outlined below (the figures given to include 10/- discount for early payment):-

	<u>OLD</u>	<u>NEW</u>
Over 21 years.	£6.10.0.	£7.5.0.
18 - 20 years inclusive.	£4.10.0.	£5.5.0.
Under 18 years.	£3.10.0.	£4.0.0.
Country Members.	£3.10.0.	£4.0.0.
Husband & Wife (Both Playing)	£10.10.0.	£12.0.0.
Family Maximum. (Not more than 2 Adult Members).	£12.10.0.	£14.10.0.

Two volunteer bar managers were appointed but it was recommended that 'draymen should not be supplied with free beer.'

The Christmas Dance profit was £26 8s 1d but it was remarked that, 'We should cater for a wider range of entertainment. We don't all consider the present 'shake' or 'hitchhike' and present-day gyrations our idea of dancing and would like to glide around the floor occasionally.'

1967

A ladies' weekday membership category was introduced for £4 10s with no playing-in test.

A roller was bought for the shale courts and further drainage systems installed under the grass.

Twenty-two men and 17 ladies took part in matches against teams of a 'high calibre'.

A fight occurred between non-members at a junior dance; admission should be by ticket only.

With the club now 'on a sound financial and practical basis', the squash court project gathered momentum and grant applications were submitted. Meanwhile, the price of a pint of draught beer was 2s and 6d and annual consumption of lemonade was 350 glasses.

1968

At a crowded AGM, the squash sub-committee reported, 'Most of you will have a broad idea of the game itself. It is a game quite independent of weather problems, courts are booked in advance, it is very vigorous and can be enjoyed by inexperienced players. As a game, it is recognised as the fastest-growing sport in the country.'

There were currently four courts in Coventry and one in Leamington with one planned for Warwick. While it would be down to tennis members to organise the project, the squash section would eventually run itself and 'in this respect the future structure of the club requires consideration to promote harmony.'

The capital cost was put at £9,732 with £4,376 likely from a government grant and £3,356 from club funds, leaving £2,000 to be raised by members but a predicted membership of 240 within five years would generate a considerable surplus.

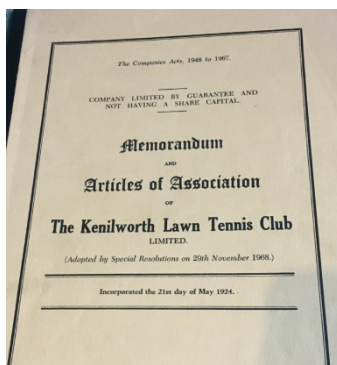
The proposal was carried unanimously and negotiations began with the builders, Garlicks. Members set about a number of fund-raising initiatives including a new '500 club'.

On the tennis front, it was decided that selection committees should pick teams for matches rather than just the captains and vice-captains. The summer was noted for rain and bad light but 38 matches were played involving 47 players. The captain mused that we could be under-rated by some of the metropolitan opposition: 'I believe they expected to find a team of yokels sucking straws and using racquets like a scythe.'

A highlight was an all-day men's and boys' doubles tournament, joined by 32 'hopefuls and has-beens' when 'youth and energy waged battle against age and cunning.'

Tennis players saw improvements to the courts after a contract was set up with a maintenance firm.

In November, there was an extraordinary general meeting to ratify amendments to the original articles of the club.



Articles adopted in 1968 - the club's name did not include squash until many years later.

In a radical move, a barman was appointed to work six nights a week at the rate of four shillings and sixpence an hour. It appeared that the seating area around the front bar, much smaller than now, was known as 'the snookery.'

In 1968, the club featured in an article in the Warwickshire and Worcestershire Life magazine, which stated, 'A large number of sports clubs find themselves having to fight for survival, either because of lack of funds or a through general lack of interest amongst members.

' On the other side of the fence are those clubs which are financially sound, well-supported and - most important of all - efficiently run. Kenilworth Lawn Tennis Club is, happily, one of these.'

1969

The long-awaited opening ceremony of the squash courts was held on a 'magical' night' in January, made special after some inspired networking by squash members. The Australian national team, who happened to be in Birmingham playing in the British Open, agreed to come over to join the celebrations. Kenilworth players drove over to collect Geoff Hunt, Ken Hiscoe, Cam Nancarrow and Dick Carter. Hunt was exhausted after losing to Jonah Barrington the night before so Hiscoe and Carter played an exhibition match. The team mingled with the crowd before their hosts returned them to Birmingham.

The final cost of the squash court project was £10,426, funded by a government grant, a loan from the National Playing Fields Association and club resources and members' donations.

Club membership soared to more than 500 overnight. The 1969 AGM heard that, 'There were some doubts in the beginning as to whether squash would divide the club but it has integrated fully and we must ensure it is kept that way. At a time when other clubs are folding or in financial trouble, we are expanding in size and strength.'

Bar profits under the full-time steward were extremely healthy with takings at £1,872 for 1968-9 compared with £1,112 the previous year. Visitors who rented the squash courts to maximise usage included Warwick University, Coventry Training College and Coventry Prep School. Another money-spinner was a new Coca-Cola vending machine, which sold 950 bottles in six months.



Tennis players enjoyed a wonderful summer but there were complaints about the standards of dress so a reminder was put on the board that in summer, whites must be worn and men's track suits and coloured sweaters were not acceptable. However, there would be no objections to ladies wearing coloured cardigans.

What next for the club? Already, an indoor tennis court, badminton hall and even a swimming pool were under consideration, but the pavilion was showing signs of wear and tear with predictions that 'substantial sums of money' would be needed for repairs and maintenance.

It seemed that anything was possible now however, with the general secretary telling members, 'This introduction of new faces, personalities and interests must always rejuvenate one's thoughts - we are all in agreement that we have done the right thing.'

Chapter Three

1970-1979

Tennis and squash members revelled in a feeling of 'success, optimism and enthusiasm.' However, the club was not one to stand still and further developments for both sections were in the pipeline.

1970

What could be better on a glorious afternoon than a game of friendly tennis followed by a sumptuous tea on the balcony? Players of all standards packed the courts for weekend club sessions.



One member recalls, "If you weren't there by 2pm, people would be looking at their watches wondering where you were. There wasn't much else going on in those days so for many people the club was their life."

The name-peg board (with pink and blue tabs) and pristine white balls were out in force and children amused themselves while their parents queued for courts and played late into the afternoon. Ladies put the kettle on and served the cakes and sandwiches. They also had their own weekday afternoon, billed as a 'pleasant and sociable occasion.'



On the competitive front, the one-day Open Tournament in June, advertised on posters around the region, attracted so many pairs that courts at the Convent were needed. A genial 'Controller' was in charge,

supported by a team of leaders for each round-robin group. The juniors also had their own Open Tournament, run by club seniors for three days. Within the club, players waited eagerly for the official draw for the annual championships - the singles and handicap doubles ran for two weeks in July and the level doubles for one week in August.

Squash members, numbering 250, set up internal leagues, enjoyed their first official Wednesday club night in September and held their own Open Tournament. The men were already in a league and the ladies followed suit with 18 matches planned for each team.

As the year went by, the waiting list to join the squash section grew to more than 60. In November, the addition of two further squash courts was mooted as a 'viable proposition.'

With players now pouring into the bar, the clubhouse also needed attention. 'The general decor and atmosphere of the bar area are not conducive to promoting the social activities required.'

Membership fees were: tennis single £8, junior £4 10s, husband and wife £12, family £14 10s and ladies' weekday £5; squash single £6, junior £4, husband and wife £9 10s, family £12. There was also a combined sport membership. Everyone had a membership card, colour coded for tennis or squash.

With its reputation growing as club, members sent articles to the local press, it was considered a good time to put up a sign at the club entrance.

Noticeboards with information about specific tennis and squash activities were put up in the changing rooms; boards in the clubhouse were to be used for general information including the names of committee members.

1971

Life at the club was one long social whirl and barely a month went by without a 'do.' More than 600 people joined the annual barbecue, with parking spilling over into a nearby field. The programme for 1971/72 included a summer dance, cheese and wine party, two finals suppers, a barge party, joint squash and tennis function, dinner-dance, Hallowe'en dance, Bonfire party, Christmas Dance, cocktail party, sherry party, champagne supper and Valentine's dance.



This prompted calls for improvements and expansion on two fronts, social and squash, and members wasted no time in drawing up a £35,000 scheme for an overhaul of the facilities to include two more squash courts and a redesign of the clubhouse.

The rear of the clubhouse was nothing like it is now and part of the area was taken up by a store room. Players congregated in the front bar, which was becoming 'drab and unwelcoming.' The plan was to extend the bar to the rear and create a more attractive drinking and social area.

The AGM of 1971 was attended by 94 members. They were told, 'We have a head-and-shoulders start on anywhere else but there is likelihood of local competition.'

'We are thinking in terms of two squash courts, which would absorb the waiting list and create additional membership places. The bar facilities are unquestionably inadequate and it is absolutely clear that we do not recognise the full potential here.'

At the same time, there were murmurs about replacing grass tennis courts with a new surface called TennisQuick and introducing floodlights.

With competing demands, the original scheme was scaled down and passed by 94 votes to 24 at a later EGM: £18,000 for two squash courts, some bar and lounge modifications and central heating, an extra grass court, resurfacing the all-weather court and a watering system for the four shale courts.

"Whilst criticism is inevitable, committee members, innocently looking forward to a pleasant hour's tennis, are greeted with, 'The grass courts have not been cut' or 'The squash courts have not been swept.' This is not conducive to enhancing their own enjoyment."

New member applications went through 14 stages. Application forms were posted on the notice board for current players to scrutinise before ratification by the General Committee. A personal letter of welcome was then dispatched.

Tennis Captains' Days were held separately for men and ladies and were for team players, by invitation. A weekday squash membership was introduced for £4.50 each with no reduction for husbands and wives or families.

1972

Bar sales for the year to March 1972 were 27 per cent up at £3,235, partly thanks to barman Reg, an 'absolute treasure.'

The car park had deteriorated so much that a new tarmac surface was laid, 'thus ensuring for next winter the return to evening shoes for dances rather than the previously more appropriate gear - wellington boots.'

Until now, mail had been redirected so this year the club bought its first locked letter box.

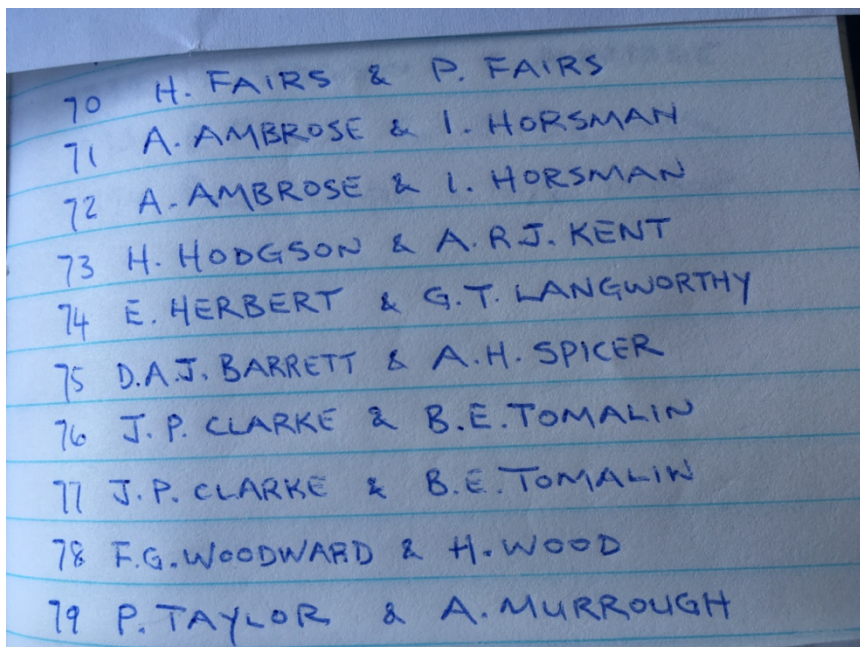
A diplomatic notice was drawn up to prevent 'misuse of the premises' by dogs, who were effectively banned.

An electric heater mysteriously appeared in the men's changing room for use as a hair dryer. This 'unnecessary extravagance' was allowed to remain but should be used economically.

It was felt that many visitors were being introduced without payment of the appropriate fees but no solution was recommended.

The standard of tennis was now so high that Monday and Tuesday evenings, traditionally set aside for men's and ladies' match practices, were now club nights, supervised by the captains and vice-captains, to give greater opportunity to members not normally participating in club matches.

The winners of the annual tennis championships received £1.50 vouchers; the runners-up received 75p.



For many years, club stalwart Barry Tomalin kept a meticulous record of tennis championship winners. Here is the wall of fame for the men's handicap doubles in the 1970s.

The two new squash courts were officially opened on 12th October 1972 and squash membership rose to 423.

There were two ladies' and two men's teams in a local league, team coaching, leagues accommodating 300 players, tournaments, a new Sunday club night with table tennis and darts, junior night on Fridays and county involvement.

1978

There is a gap in club records in the years 1973-1977 but it seems that more improvements were made to the clubhouse and bar/lounge facilities in the mid-1970s and early 1980s. At some point, the front bar area was widened and the bridge was built, connecting the squash courts to the main clubhouse, creating the lounge/rear bar area as we know it today.

The tennis section (and later the squash) set up an annual open meeting for members to air their views. This was then held religiously for around 35 years, when attendance started to dwindle.

The final of the National Police Tennis Championships was held at the club.

By now, the men's teams were taking part in the Coventry and District Lawn Tennis League.

There was a 'high degree of co-operation, assistance, willingness to help and general happy spirit prevailing in the section.'

The squash section had a waiting list of 70 and the junior membership was closed altogether.

Breaking News...

Kenilworth Tennis Club has abolished its playing-in test in order to attract more members.

'This meant we might have to amend the playing structure of the section and encourage more coaching. In fact, we did not find it necessary to change our present system of play, mainly due to the fact that the majority of new members turned out to be proficient players,' said a spokesman.

A beginning-of-season open day was organised and this had the desired result of recruiting a number of new members. There was an increase in senior members of 46, equivalent to a 25 per cent jump in one year.

There were three men's teams and two ladies' teams in local squash leagues and friendly matches gave more members an opportunity to compete. Some players were selected for county teams, which had success at national level. Junior night was moved to a Saturday with extended court time.

Sunday club night was swamped and a Most Improved Player Award attracted two-thirds of squash members to the internal mini-leagues. A highlight was the over-40s vs under-40s match with the prize awarded to the losers.

'Throughout the county, Kenilworth has an excellent reputation for friendliness and hospitality and this is due, almost entirely, to the ladies who provide the match suppers so magnificently.'



In the 1970s, the junior discos were 'literally the hot ticket in Kenilworth,' according to one longstanding member. 'Everyone, regardless of interest in squash or tennis, wanted to be there. I think enough time has passed now that I can own up to having made a good return in running a black market for tickets...'

1979

The sun was setting on the grass court era. The main development this year was the installation of three tennis new courts in front of the clubhouse. Made from a hard, porous surface called TennisQuick, they would ensure year-round play. Five grass, four shale and one old all-weather court were still available.

Grants and loans towards the project, which cost £17,745, were received from The Sports Council, Warwick District Council, the Playing Fields Association and LTA.

Two of the courts (later three) would be floodlit to 'championship standard'. However, there was a problem with acquiring light poles, so, using their initiative, members asked the Coventry Corporation Depot for old lamp standards and formed a working party to put them up over a weekend. Floodlight meters were set at a cost of £1.20 per hour.

The courts opened in May and with increased tennis membership - 200 seniors and 100 juniors - club tournaments were among the most successful ever. Visiting county players from Nottingham remarked that they were 'very impressed' with facilities.

Winter leagues were brought in for men, ladies and mixed pairs and a winter Wednesday club night saw excellent attendance.

This summer, the ladies entered a team in Division Three of the Coventry and District Lawn Tennis League and were promoted.

Floodlights enabled extended match play, which was fortunate as matches in those days were the best of three sets (no championship tie-break).

Pictures from 1979 show preparation work on the three new TennisQuick courts. By then, the front of the clubhouse had been extended to the right. Players can be seen on the shale courts in the background; there are grass courts which eventually became croquet lawns.



Meanwhile, pressure on squash courts was 'greater than at any time we can remember.' Internal leagues flourished, teams were entered in the Banbury Cup and Witherley Tournament and members held a Boxing Day soccer match against Cov and North Warwicks.

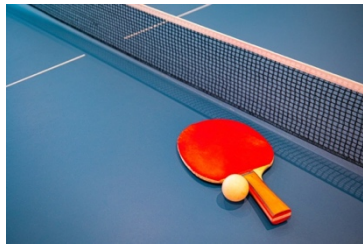
Juniors were displaying a 'responsible attitude' to running their own section.

A report stated that, 'We have fine playing facilities and our clubhouse and amenities are second to none. The club is now among the best equipped in the county.' Even the fruit machine was in profit!

Chapter Four

1980-1989

Membership soared to 900 with 524 squash, 325 tennis and 51 social. A Space Invaders machine was among the money-spinners. A smart new table tennis table was bought. However, as thoughts turned to further development, numbers started to fall. A band of croquet enthusiasts was therefore eager to bring a new dimension to the club.



1980

Fees for tennis and squash saw a dramatic 15 per cent increase, supported by the 60 members who attended the AGM. These were: single £40, husband and wife £66, family £80, junior, country and ladies' weekday £20. There was a combined sport membership and new members also paid a joining fee of between £5 and £15 depending on the category.

There were 15 general Committee members: president, vice-president, house (structure), general secretary, treasurer, tennis secretary, squash secretary, amenities and bar, deputy bar manager, subscriptions, social, fund-raising, house (domestic), security and one other.

After play, members could enjoy a variety of meals served on paper plates. The bar made healthy profits and there was also a 200 Club with 165 members.

The men's and ladies' first teams won promotion to the top divisions of the Coventry tennis league and the men's second team won promotion to division four.

Balls (by now yellow) for social tennis were no longer free - 'the experiment of members providing their own tennis balls (90p for three) by purchasing them through the club was proving acceptable.'



Squash players were asked to put their membership cards on display above the courts while they played, to confirm that they were members, as many non-members were trying to get in. Letters were sent to tennis members who had not ensured that visitors paid their fees.

Squash teams faced challenges and relegations. A report stated, 'Since the game of squash became open, several clubs are paying professionals to play for their teams and consequently the competition at the top has become very strong.'

'As it is not the policy of this club to offer free membership for team players, we will probably find promotion very difficult.'

'Another result of the increased commercialisation is the fierce competition in sponsored tournaments where the prizes have become sufficiently attractive for bending of the rules, contrary to the original aims of the sponsors.'

1981

Social events included a Valentine's Dance, skittles night, barbecue, family day, Hallowe'en disco, bonfire party, Christmas dance and a New Year's Eve disco.

The first club newsletter was introduced and members were asked to submit contributions.

With finances healthy, it was time to plan again. A Future Projects committee was formed to look at various options: building a fifth squash court; replacing the shale courts and building a tennis practice wall; constructing a bowling green or croquet lawn; moving the ladies' changing rooms to the gents, moving the gents downstairs and moving the kitchen into the vacant ladies!

A new handyman was appointed to look after the house and grounds at the rate of £1.50 per hour.

A highlight of 1981 was the ladies' tennis first team becoming champions of the Coventry and District League - the name is engraved on this somewhat tarnished trophy and can just about be seen again in 1996. In 1984, the men were joint champions.



Squash teams had mixed fortunes in their winter leagues but 65 players took part in friendly matches and a mixed team involving 30 players won a local summer league.

1982

The club had use of a free television during an exciting sporting summer. Jimmy Connors and Martina Navratilova won at Wimbledon and England footballers failed to reach the semis of the World Cup in Spain even though they did not lose a match.

A ladies' keep fit class for £2.50 per participant was permitted on the squash courts.

Squash and tennis membership took a slight dip due to recession and more demands on people's time. This was starting to 'prompt some concerns.'

While praising the efficient running of the section, the squash secretary reported, 'We know that other local clubs are also suffering - there are adverts for members in the local papers.'

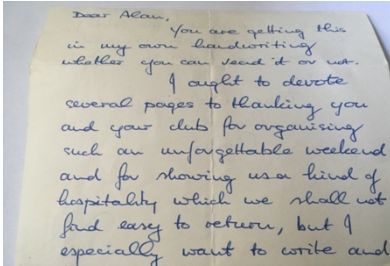
Consideration needed to be given to subscriptions as members were not leaving to join other clubs but new applicants were not actually taking up membership, due principally to rates being higher than elsewhere.

On the tennis front, it was noted that, 'More and more people have been tending to arrange fixed fours and fixed singles matches rather than being prepared to come along and support the normal club playing times.'

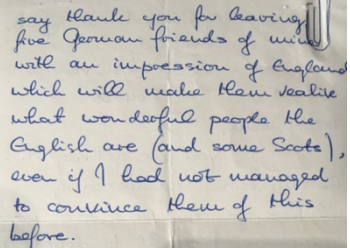
However, all sections reported an enjoyable season and the bar turnover for the year ending September 1982 was £33,117, showing a profit of £9,616, an increase of 29 per cent over the previous 12 months.

Once again, the fruit machine was a gold mine, yielding a profit of £7,100!

1983



Dear Alan, you are getting this in my own handwriting whether you can send it on not. I ought to devote several pages to thanking you and your club for organising such an unforgettable weekend and for showing us a kind of hospitality which we shall not find easy to return, but I especially want to write and



say thank you for leaving five German friends of mine with an impression of England which will make them realise what wonderful people the English are (and some Scots), even if I had not managed to convince them of this before.

Thanks to everybody.
Regards,
Peter
Graham

In 1983, squash members hosted visitors from the Pirmasens Club in West Germany. Peter Kroher and Graham Wood, from the German club, corresponded with Kenilworth's Alan Cowley to arrange the trip. The visitors travelled by ferry and stayed at the homes of their Kenilworth counterparts. Here is their letter of thanks.

Also in 1983, further improvements were made to the lounge at a cost of £6,700, funded by a loan from Whitbread brewery. A modern, cooled cellar was built in 1986.

Membership had fallen somewhat to 650 and attendance at social functions (there were about 15 per year) started to wane in the mid-1980s so a local advertising campaign was launched.

Squash teams (the men's over-35s was 'the jewel in the crown') sought sponsorship.

Generally however, the sports continued to thrive and a tea urn was bought to cope with demand at club sessions.

1987

Records for part of the 1980s are sketchy but 1987 was a big year for the tennis section. It was 25 years since the move from Queens Road (though a year before the silver jubilee of the clubhouse opening) and time to say goodbye to the 'very bad' shale courts. More than £44,000 was used to replace two (now courts 4 and 5) with artificial grass and two (now 2 and 3) with a hard surface.



An opening ceremony for the courts was followed a few weeks later by a new-style Captains' Day, open to all men and ladies regardless of standard. Sixty-four players in two teams enjoyed an all-day social competition with buffet lunch and tea. The inclusive format, with chocolate prizes, continues to this day.

The D.A.N. Riley Trophy

The club depends on an army of volunteers to keep the show on the road. Outgoing president D.A.N. (Dan) Riley donated a shield to honour members for making a significant contribution to club life. Those eligible include not just long-serving committee members but others who have masterminded a capital project, raised the club's profile or have always been 'on hand' to make the tea, sell the raffle tickets or get stuck into the 1001 jobs that make the club go round.

Initially, the President's Shield was presented alternately to squash and tennis members but was extended to croquet and is now not always presented in a strict rotation between the sections.

It has been awarded at the spring AGM since 1987, with only a few gaps. The first 11 years are on the original trophy, pictured here, and a new trophy was ordered for subsequent winners. On the opposite page is the roll of honour.



Paid employees at the club include those managing and working behind the bar, cleaners, grounds staff and, over the years, some administrative helpers. Coaches have various financial arrangements.

Some clubs have moved towards salaried managers to take on a large number of jobs as volunteers become harder to find due to the demands of modern life.

1987: Trevor Sanderson
1988: John Vincent
1989: Derek Grover
1990: Doug Taylor
1991: Diane Grover
1992: Barry Tomalin
1993: Alan Cowley
1994: Joan and Philip Wolfenden
1995: Brian Thompson
1996: Tony Jennings
1997: Janet Faulkner
1998: Nigel Macbeth
1999: Howard Snow
2000: Peter Dennis
2001: Olwen Brown-Waite
2002: Roy Cooper
2003: Kay Gebbels
2004: Roy Abelwhite
2005: Melanie and Paul Jennings
2006: Roger More
2007: David Skinner
2008: Alan Pearson
2009: Bill Sidebottom
2010: Mike Ducker and Peter Wilson
2011: Dennis Cooley
2012: Janet Robinson
2013: Ray Clipson
2014: John Wilson
2015: Kate Perkins
2016: Roy Johnston
2019: Shirley Whiting
2023: Ian Cochrane

1988-1989

With grass courts on the way out, members sought pastures new in terms of opportunity. In 1989, John Kelley approached Doug Taylor with the idea of forming a croquet club, knowing that a number of others would offer support.

Two redundant grass courts behind tennis courts 4 and 5 became a full-size croquet lawn, albeit with a noticeable slope, and Doug managed the lawn cutting, weeding and marking of lines. Doug was a dedicated squash and tennis member, and even today players have fond memories of his Saturday tennis coaching sessions for juniors.

Chris Hudson, from the Croquet Association, came along to give some basic coaching. At the time, Association Croquet was the order of the day in the croquet world and a simpler form,



Golf Croquet, was regarded as something of a poor relation.

The players had no storage so the hoops, mallets and balls had to be fetched from and returned to a store in the basement of the squash courts building. This continued until the members built a pavilion in the late 1990s when a second lawn was created (more of that to come!).

Pictured are some original members, from left: Bill Sidebottom, Doug Taylor, John Robinson, Roger Tribe, John Leader, David Taylor, Bill Browne and Jim Ward. Other pioneers were Peter Dennis, Neil Stevenson and Nancy Robinson.

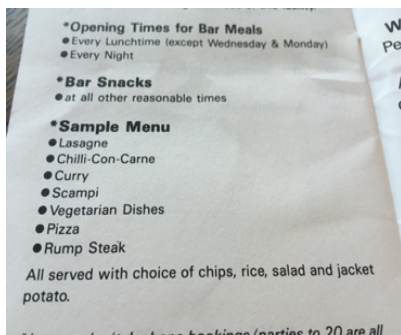
The club loves a good fund-raiser and in the autumn of 1989 more than 60 squash players held a 24-hour marathon to raise £3,477 for the Walsgrave Hospital Cancer Ward Appeal.



Note: At the 1988 AGM, around 20 years after squash was introduced, the club finally changed its name to Kenilworth Lawn Tennis and Squash Club!



Tennis players had an annual handbook with details of committee members, rules, and bar times. It was printed by Rosemarie Orr (above) who is delighted that copies are still being hoarded! Fixtures were listed - by the late 80s, there were three men's and three ladies' tennis teams in the Coventry league and an incredible 24 friendly matches.



Chapter Five

1990-1999

It was quite a decade! A fifth squash court was built, racketball arrived, tennis players knocked up with an international star and croquet members embarked on a gruelling labour of love. There were some struggles along the way but the club received an unexpected windfall and there was renewed focus on juniors.

1990

Several clubs around the region were investing in indoor tennis courts. Eyeing up an opportunity at Kenilworth, a local coach put forward a proposal for a 'bubble' beyond the TennisQuick courts. When the project hit the early planning stage, the local press described the structure as a *'huge glowing dome,'* causing consternation among neighbours. Eventually, it was abandoned for operational and financial reasons, much to the relief of the tennis committee.



The club was healthy and yet another refurbishment was planned for the lounge.

Bar takings for the 12 months to May were £37,868.92.

The tennis and squash sections held a joint open week and the newsletter, which had fallen by the wayside, was relaunched.

Following an influx of squash players from Wootton Court, which had just closed, there was talk of building a fifth squash court. Meanwhile, the Wootton Court contingent included players who brought a new sport to the club - racketball. This was a fast-growing sport, similar to squash but played with a larger ball and a racket with a larger head. Initially known as 'paddle rackets', it was invented in the US in 1949 with the aim of combining handball and squash.

1991

In January, squash membership was closed at 365 but 'no attempt would be made to consider a fifth squash court.' However, at an open meeting of the section in April, 'a general feeling that a fifth squash court would be beneficial was prevalent' and work began in earnest to secure funding.

This year, plans were put in place to move squash and tennis light meters from cash to tokens.

The Kenilworth Ladies Netball Team was granted use of the all-weather tennis court. The addition to the club was initially a 'smooth marriage' but there was an amicable separation six months later.

Want a different sort of doubles? For many years, bridge players, including non-members, paired up on Monday nights for relaxed games organised by Philip and Joan Wolfenden. Tables were set up in the lounge and at Christmas there were challenges with a difference - such as playing anticlockwise or 'ace low, two high.'



1992

Juniors were allowed to attend regular film nights and could submit their choice of video in advance.

Membership fees for the year were: single £120, husband and wife £192, family £240, single parent family £180, weekday £54, junior or student £48, croquet £30, netball £25, social £20.

A highlight of the tennis season was the annual draw for Wimbledon tickets. Pairs of tickets were issued to the club for each day of the championships and members signed on a sheet in the foyer. Juniors had exclusive access to tickets on the first Tuesday. Candidates gathered in anticipation to see if their numbered silver disc was drawn out for a coveted seat at SW19. This was eventually phased out as the LTA dealt directly with players through a computerised system.



Plans for the fifth squash court progressed and had the support of most members at the AGM.

The likely cost was £40,000-plus and members would have to raise some of this themselves.

By the end of the year, tennis membership stood at 301 seniors and 153 juniors and was on the point of being closed. Squash membership was 271 seniors and 58 juniors.

1993

The fifth squash court was opened in January 1993 and the next project was the installation of saunas in the changing rooms, favoured more by the men than the ladies.

At the 1993 AGM, there was a vote on smoking. The majority were against a ban on smoking either in the whole club or in the lounge and after studying hand-drawn plans, members opted for part of the lounge to be set aside for smokers.

General committee meetings sometimes went on and on, with one lasting from 7.30 - 11.15pm. When, after a 7.45pm start, there was a 9.41pm finish, this was hailed as 'A NEW RECORD.'



Here's a photograph from tennis member Hannah Kingston, currently captain of the ladies' second team and mum to two keen juniors. In 1993, Hannah belonged to Stratford club and was among young players at the immensely popular Kenilworth Open Junior Tournament. She won the Under-18 girls singles trophy and is on the right of this picture. Her contemporaries include young players from Kenilworth.

1994

With changing lifestyles, it was proving harder to find volunteers and for several months in 1993 and for most of 1994 there was no treasurer. Accounts were kept in order however and with a VAT refund of more than £20,000, plans were drawn up by the tennis section for four new hard courts to replace the three TennisQuick courts, now 15 years old.

Social events included an It's a Knockout Day, a pig roast which brought in £1,000 to the bar and the use of the clubhouse for Step Reebok classes. The club video machine was sold and instead, Sky Sports was installed on a trial basis. However, use of the television in the lounge bar attracted complaints about intrusiveness and rowdiness.

A labour of love for 'Doug's Army'

Since the first croquet lawn came into play, there had been a good spirit among the membership who decided to roll up their sleeves and create a second lawn, entirely from scratch. After some discussion between Doug Taylor, Bill Sidebottom and Peter Dennis, it was decided the lawn should be full-sized and Peter Dennis accepted the task of masterminding the project. With limited funds and manpower, 'Doug's Army' set to work using 'blood, sweat and tears.'

Work commenced in October 1994, the first job being to dig out an encroaching bank behind tennis court six. Hour after hour, day after day, the team used a mini-excavator to extract the heavy clay and wheel it in barrows to a pond by the car park. One hundred tons of topsoil were spread and levelled and, with the help of 250 pegs, the area was turned into a flat surface. Strings were then strung over the pegs to break the area down into smaller parts and the topsoil was raked over. The seeding and raking was also done by hand as the team could not afford a mechanical spreader.



During germination, there was a dry period which spelled disaster. Leamington Fire Service came to the rescue with their hoses and flooded the area, resulting in a miraculous appearance of grass shortly afterwards. 'There was a bright green sward to behold!'



The new lawn had its first cut in October 1995 and was left to settle over the winter until it finally opened for play in April 1996 - read on for further pictures!

Finally, the second croquet lawn was almost complete. Here are Doug Taylor and Peter Dennis, celebrating after many months of hard labour. Doug cut the lawn in October 1995.



1995

It is not often that a Wimbledon finalist visits the club, but that's what happened in May. Olga Morozova, the 'Godmother of Russian Tennis' joined a ceremony to open the four floodlit hard courts (6,7,8 and 9). Miss Morozova was runner-up to Chris Evert in the 1974 French Open and Wimbledon finals, teaming up with Chris Evert to win the French Open doubles in the same year. She later devoted her life to coaching and in 1995 was in charge of the British women's team. Here she is with James Dixon, Sam Nicklin, Nicola Gebbels and Laura Marchant.



Here's a story (and picture taken around 1995) from Jim Minnis, who recalls the influx of squash members to Kenilworth and Leamington after Wootton Court closed in 1990. Following the death of popular member



Tommy Tonkins, a competition for the Tommy Tonkins Trophy was created, held biannually between the two clubs for several years. Among those in the photo are Alan Drummond, Roger Adams, Jim Minnis, Peter Minshaw, Mel Broome, Roy Cooper and Tommy Tonkins Jr.

1996

While membership had ebbed and flowed over the years, 1996 was the first year that the minutes stressed real cause for concern. Numbers stood at: tennis seniors 242, juniors 132; squash seniors 319, juniors 54; social 30.

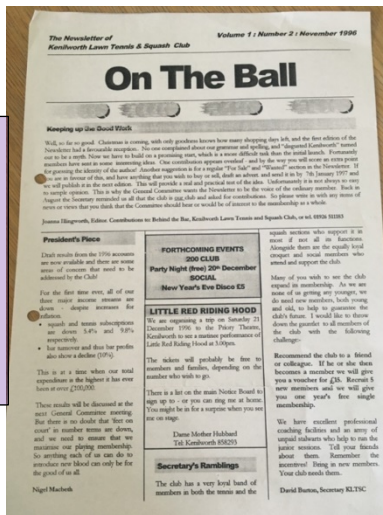
Croquet were very happy with 26 and confident of attracting more. The section joined the West Midlands Croquet Federation and eight members played in Croquet Association tournaments, one of which was won by our own Roger Tribe.

Each section enjoyed events including the squash Broken Racket Tournament, a trip to Barcelona and a tennis fund-raiser for the children's Snowball Appeal. The ladies' tennis first team won the Coventry and District League for the second time. Artificial grass courts 4 and 5 were relaid and the adjacent courts 1,2 and 3 repainted. Junior squash Sunday afternoons were a big hit.

However, despite a number of social nights, including a karaoke evening, a band night, race night, curry night and New Year's Eve party, there were worries about 'lack of buzz.' It was noted that quiz nights were now preferable to 'raves.'

'We must look for ways to make KLTSC a more desirable club. The number of social events has reduced and the bar has been poorly supported,' stated one report.

A questionnaire was sent out to 100 members to ask for their views on improving the club. An overhaul of the changing rooms, improvements to the lower bar area to enhance atmosphere and the addition of a fitness facility were top of their list.



To engage more members, a concerted effort was made to produce a more professional newsletter, *On the Ball*, which ran for many years. Appeals went out for 'envelope stuffers.'

The Broken Door Drama

Kenilworth's Pete Meggitt has kindly offered this tale for all those tempted to see red when on the losing end of a squash match. Pete used to play for Warwick (on the Woodloes) and was up against Derek Smith at Kenilworth. Spectators gathered eagerly, as both were known for great spirit and craft. Kenilworth went 1-0 up and Pete, somewhat annoyed, opened the court door rather robustly as he dashed off to find some water. Sadly, the door came off its hinges - not Pete's intention - and fell to the floor. For the rest of the encounter and subsequent rubbers, players had to wedge the door into the frame. Good humour followed in the bar afterwards but after some correspondence between club officials, Warwick sent over some new door hinges. Pete was instructed to write an apology to Kenilworth, in which he humbly stated, *'I would like to think this unfortunate incident can be resolved amicably by both clubs, ensuring future matches can be completed devoid of trouble.'*

1997

Members were urged, 'Rally to the call, put your thinking caps on and attend the AGM' to help restore some dynamism to the club.

A report to members said, 'In the 1960s, there was a pool of young people who could spare time to run the club, and membership and consequent affluence grew effortlessly. In recent years, this has not been so easy and in the last three years the general committee has been incomplete.'

One option was to employ a club manager, a route chosen by other clubs. The issue became so contentious that 150 members attended an Extraordinary General Meeting.

The whole-club manager option was voted down because it was considered too expensive. Instead, the members opted to take on a bar manager (not just a steward) with extra duties including running the social side, promoting the club and becoming part of the General Committee.

Marketing was proving difficult and earlier in the decade a club logo had been designed and affixed to clothing sold behind the bar. It was tinkered with over the years and by 1997 was used on letterheads, looking much as it does today.



Members were urged to recruit four new members each in return for a free subscription; introducing just one member would earn them £45 to spend at the bar.

There were plenty of bright spots however. Squash and tennis players joined forces to organise a 24-hour event which raised £10,000 for the Breakthrough breast cancer charity.

Croquet continued to thrive and visitors from York, London and Bristol attended a referees course. Players enjoyed a match against Edgbaston Priory.

A fourth ladies tennis team entered the Coventry league to meet demand for competitive play.

Meanwhile, for the juniors, a sea-change was already on the horizon. Youngsters in squash and tennis had been well-served by a mixture of coaches and dedicated volunteers but on the national scene, more opportunities were opening up for youth participation and competition.

Both sections therefore started to look ahead at employing coaches who would be part of new structures aimed at giving children a clearer pathway.

On the tennis front, coach Mark Walker was employed to engage with the Lawn Tennis Association's Development Scheme and Community Tennis Programme to encourage more people to take up tennis and to build links with local schools.

The squash committee, conscious that facilities were rivalled by a plethora of gyms and leisure centres, employed coach Dave Edwards to 'raise the club's profile' and become a 'centre of excellence.'

Continued support for juniors earned the club a full business rate relief of £14,000 - which would be swallowed up by replacing the clubhouse roof.

1998 and 1999

The Joan Wood Bequest

In 1998, the club received a generous windfall which offset some of the financial challenges. Devoted tennis member Joan Wood, who had died the previous September, left £50,000 in her will for tennis development.

Joan's husband Hedley, a popular figure at the bar, had predeceased her and already a bell for last orders had been installed in his memory.

The couple joined the club in 1970 and were keen players and committee members. In 1991, they donated the Wood Trophy for the



Centurions' tennis competition involving mixed pairs with a combined age of at least 100. It is still going strong!

Tennis committee members, led by Mike Ducker and Peter Wilson, spent many months considering options which would best honour the Woods' wishes. The first project to be completed, in 1999, was an overhaul of the lower bar - renamed the Joan and Hedley Lounge. The club had already committed to funding the installation of artificial grass on courts 2 and 3, a task finished in 1998, so much of the bequest was used in 1999 to install floodlights there and to upgrade all other floodlighting on the junior court and courts 6-9. A mechanical brush was bought to help maintain the artificial grass courts, which needed constant care and attention by volunteers.

Over to croquet and in 1998 the players set about another DIY task - building their own pavilion. After making a cardboard model, they created the hexagonal structure in sections in John Leader's garage, to 'great fun and laughs'

before it was transported to Crackley, bit by bit, and installed on their homemade base. Finally, they had somewhere for storage, shelter and spectating! In addition, word was spreading about the facilities. The club hosted an eliminator



round for the World Golf Croquet Championships, which took place in Leamington in 1998 and some of our players acted as referees and ballboys for the tournament, dominated by talented Egyptians. The federation donated equipment to the club as a token of thanks. In 1999, the section enjoyed a 10th anniversary dinner at the Clarendon Arms.

In the late 1990s, the club was already developing its own website, believed to be the first among Warwickshire clubs. The 'proximity' or swipe card system for entry was also adopted in 1999.



For efforts with junior development through 1999, Kenilworth was named CLUB OF THE YEAR by the Warwickshire Lawn Tennis Association. What a way to round off the century!

Chapter Six

2000-2013

The club entered the new millennium on a positive note 'in good health and heart' but members were urged not to be complacent. The message was, 'We have a super club here - make sure we use it! Support the club through the functions and the bar. If you can help, please do so!'

2000

The dress code in the lounge bar had always been controversial, with players urged to change before having a drink. In 2000, the rule was relaxed so that, 'it is acceptable for members to use both the sports bar (downstairs) and the lounge bar (upstairs) without changing out of sports attire. However, the bar manager will 'have the right to politely ask a heavily-perspiring member to remove themselves from the lounge bar if they offend other users.'



Tennis membership in July 2000 was considered stable at 242 seniors and 169 juniors. Play Tennis Days to attract new members became a fixture - this picture of happy children was taken in 2000. After the recent Club of the Year Award from the Warwickshire LTA, it was decided that the £500 prize would be used to subsidise junior coaching on Friday nights. Several young pairs were now competing in the South Warwickshire League.

The Warwickshire Closed Squash Competition was once again held at Kenilworth and the club entered a team in the Warwickshire Racketball League.

Squash membership stood at 239 seniors and 53 juniors and the section was hoping for an upturn in fortunes with the appointment of Steve Townsend as a full-time coach.



It proved to be a fantastic investment as Steve - who is still with us today - has coached many players to international standard.

He reflects, "During one of my first one-to-one sessions, I coached a lad called David Rostill, whom the club was particularly proud of. I advised him what to expect and told him a little about me and about what we might work on.

'He interjected, telling me I was rambling. From that point, I knew Kenilworth members would keep me grounded!'

Croquet members said they were full of enthusiasm as they prepared for an open day, with the proceeds going to Childline. 'How many clubs can boast that they have two members ranked in the top 50 of their sport in a country which last year retained the World Cup?'

The club rejected a request to install a BT phone mast on the premises. Environmental concerns from members outweighed financial benefits.

2001-2003

It all started in Queens Road in 1901! Happy 100th birthday to us!

In 2001, the tennis section drew up plans for a Kids Zone, a small court with a practice wall. After much hard work, a £5,000 Awards for All Lottery grant was obtained towards the project, masterminded by tennis chairman Mike Ducker and tennis secretary Peter Wilson. It was opened in 2003. Peter also had a busy year in 2002, managing a huge overhaul of the changing rooms and the installation of the ramp from the car park.



Junior organiser Anne Holmes entered a mini-tennis float for the Kenilworth Carnival in 2003. As the beautifully-decorated float left the club, it became stuck at the entrance due to overhanging branches, which someone had to hastily lop down.



The club 'phone number was written on scores of tennis balls which the children tossed into the crowds.

Squash members embarked on a journey which would earn Kenilworth a permanent place on the international map. There was a boom in junior membership and in 2003 the men's first team won the Warwickshire County Squash Championship for the first time. The section followed their tennis counterparts by also gaining a £5,000 Lottery grant for junior projects. Four juniors were now of a standard to represent England in the European or World Championships and 60 per cent of players in county under-11 and under-13 sides were Kenilworth juniors. Incredibly, the floors on courts 1 and 2 were the originals, installed back in 1968!



In 2003, the club welcomed full-time tennis coach James Roe (pictured), who has stayed with us ever since. The early part of the decade saw an enormous expansion in junior tennis, with mini-tennis sessions at Kenilworth School and the chance for teenagers to train as junior tennis assistants. James is famed for his legendary awards at the junior finals presentation night - anyone who has an unusual haircut or a budding romance can expect a certificate! For all the members, there was another bonus - carpet replaced the hard surface on courts 8 and 9 in 2003.

2004 and 2005

In 2004, the Ladies' Squash first team won the Warwickshire Premiership title for the first time as the section cemented its reputation as the 'place to be.' They repeated this in 2005 and 2006. Former world champion Sarah Fitzgerald visited the club - one of many notable stars to wield a racket here. In 2005-2006, eight club youngsters were in the top 20 nationally of their age groups.

The ladies also made their mark on the croquet scene as an 'embryonic ladies' section' was introduced. A ladies' trophy was made by Diane Jeffcott, who won it in 2004 and 2005. Golf croquet was starting to overtake Association Croquet in popularity, leading to an increase in members from the middle of the decade.



Towards the end of 2004, membership stood at: tennis 271 seniors and an extraordinary 261 juniors; squash 226 seniors, 85 juniors; croquet 40. The club earned rate relief for becoming a Community Amateur Sports Club.

The club was asked to be a polling station for the 2004 European Parliament elections and subsequent local council and General Elections.

In 2005, the club hosted the inaugural County Racketball Championships. Racketball was 'attracting the more mature members who were happy to occupy the rear half of the court.'

With health and safety regulations being continually tightened, the General Committee had no option but to spend £69,641 on yet more bar improvements to modernise the cellar, storage, flooring, heating, lighting and ceiling with work on general ambience being done at the same time.



Here's another trophy, in memory of squash member Tony Russell, who died in 2005. Tony was also a supporter of tennis and social events and the club walking, skiing and golf groups. Friend Roy Massey, who had joined the club in 1997 and became treasurer, created the 'Tony Trophy,' for the winner of an annual golf tournament in Tony's memory which ran until 2021. The broken club head and La Quinta ball originated from a Spanish golf holiday which Tony, Roy and two other members had enjoyed. Tony and friends are pictured here on a skiing trip to Kitzbuhel in 2005.

Members enjoyed summer balls with a champagne reception and band. The traditional fireworks night, with parking in a helpful neighbour's field, was still a popular alternative to the castle event.

2006 and 2007

For better or worse, the era of **red tape** was now well and truly upon us with demands for risk assessments, safeguarding policies and various action plans for this and that placing extra administrative burdens on hard-pressed but endlessly dedicated volunteers.

Each section had a sinking fund so that enough was available for court refurbishment. The tennis section had a 10-year rolling plan: in 2006 courts 4 and 5 had new carpet (2 and 3 two years later).

In 2006, tennis members Howard and Sue Snow decided to emigrate to Western Australia. Howard was ending his tenure as club General Secretary and his parting shot was to help round up documents and minutes relating to the club history, for storage in the cellar. Thank you, Howard! Howard and Sue soon became leading lights at South Mandurah Club, a short distance from their new house. In a message from Down Under, Howard explained that he was quickly roped into being Vice-President, then President, while Sue took on the role of Secretary then assisted the social activities team. Sue continues to play but Howard has moved to golf, with 'no more sudden stops and reversal of direction you get when playing tennis.' Here they are in Oz, with Kenilworth's Jan Robinson, Sue's sister.



Squash coach Steve Townsend reflects that by now an 'exceptional group of juniors' was coming through, Sarah-Jane Perry (SJ), Tom Perry, Guy Pearson and Chloe Pearson among them. Steve said, "We started to attract juniors from other clubs and it was truly a remarkable time. We outperformed all other clubs in Warwickshire and the West Midlands and this dominance was the incentive for them to up their game."



A group of tennis players visited a club in Eppstein, Kenilworth's twin town in Germany. Club members David and Sheila Skinner had lived in Germany for 10 years and joined the Kenilworth Twinning Association - and the club - on their return. Sheila suggested building a link with the Eppstein club and made the initial contact; their hosts then arranged accommodation and a playing timetable. The visit took place in 2007 and in this picture are some of our players: Stan Barker, Peter Wilson, Mike Storey, Kay Gebbels, Caroline Rhodes and Sheila Skinner. Meanwhile, Sheila believes she may be the oldest current member to have belonged to the club at its original ground in Queens Road. If anyone can beat that, please let us know!

2008 - 2010



Always ready with a sense of humour, the croquet section used some digital manipulation to produce a picture of a 'crowd' for a tournament in 2008. Also pictured is (the real) Peter Dennis on a pristine lawn. In 2010, Peter was awarded Life Membership for his many contributions to the whole club over 33 years. The award had previously been given to Dan Riley and Doug Taylor.

For many years, David Skinner was our press officer. Almost every event enjoyed press coverage in the Kenilworth Weekly News and Coventry Telegraph with his well-chosen words and pictures.



In 2009, David won the Warwickshire LTA Press Officer of the Year award at a celebration in Birmingham. Reflecting on the accolade, he said, "This as unusual, as the award normally went to real journalists."

Breakthrough for Sarah-Jane

Outstanding squash player Sarah-Jane Perry had a major breakthrough in 2009 when she won both the British and European Under-19 championships.

Sarah-Jane (SJ) had been one of a group of youngsters to rise quickly through the ranks due to the squash coaching programme. However, after leaving school, Sarah-Jane, a sporting all-rounder, delayed turning professional immediately, opting instead to study engineering at Warwick University, a move which she later said prepared her well for a squash career.



With the continued success of the squash section in the months to come and a string of other players - Chris Fuller, Geoff Redfern, Chloe Pearson and Steve Townsend - competing at international level, there was talk of building a sixth squash court.



Talking of breaking news, in 2010 Paul Jennings, pictured left, completed his last summer league season as men's tennis captain as part of a 25-year stint in the job - a record for a committee post?

2011

James Cooper and the Cooper Cup

James Cooper was a popular tennis coach at Kenilworth and Beechwood clubs. In 2011, James, aged 25, and his friend James Kouzaris were killed in a gun attack while enjoying a holiday in Florida.

Their families and friends set up Always a Chance, a charity which has since raised £400,000 towards projects to steer young people away from crime.

The two clubs launched the Cooper Cup, played by adults at one venue and children at the other, usually raising around £2,000.

James's parents, Sandy and Stan, have kindly chosen some pictures of James to share with us.

Another picture, of the Kenilworth contingent at Beechwood from later years, shows how the tournament is still going strong.

A bench dedicated to James was installed at Kenilworth, funded by friend Tom Holmes, who played a rota of members to re-create Wimbledon's longest match of 11 hours, six minutes (beating it by one minute). Tom is pictured here with Sandy and Stan.





In an effort to bring the sections together, squash member Roger More initiated an annual squash versus tennis croquet match. Here are players at the inaugural event in 2011.

2012

Kenilworth was an ideal venue to host an annual 'Davis Cup.' It ran for years and by 2012 was a very popular fixture. That year it was won by Poland; the next year by Serbia. Players were divided into national teams to compete for a trophy donated by Janet Davis in memory of her husband David, a keen tennis player.



2013

After years of debate and planning and a vote at the 2012 AGM, the squash section went ahead with the development of a sixth court. Just under half the cost came from England Squash and Racketball, who granted £50,000. In June 2013, an opening ceremony with showpiece matches involving SJ (now world number 18), Emma Beddoes (ranked 31), Chris Fuller (154) and club champion Guy Pearson marked another milestone in Kenilworth squash history. That year, the ladies' squash first team, pictured above, were runners-up in the National Club Championships.



Tennis juniors from tots to teens enjoyed incredible opportunities to have fun or compete at Kenilworth and around the county. From junior nights with free ice cream to barbecues and Christmas parties, there was never a dull moment at the club and that remains so today. Children competed at red, orange or green level to start with before graduating to a national ranking system and earning the chance to play in adult teams. Some of our juniors are pictured here at the county Under-9 finals in Birmingham in 2013.

Sunday 5th May 2013

Party time!

The clubhouse in Crackley Lane opened on 5th May, 1963. The club had moved from its original site in Queens Road, where it was founded in 1901.

To celebrate this Golden Jubilee, tennis, squash, racketball, croquet and social members organised a magnificent garden party with entertainment for all ages. Previous members, including three who moved the club to Crackley, came along to enjoy the sunshine (and watch youngsters hurl sponges at their coaches).

Tennis member Kay Gebbels, who by 2013 had been a member for 36 years, recalls 'one of the best social occasions ever.'

In her own treasured collection of club memorabilia, she has written an extensive account of the day.

"It was delightful to look round and see so many new families but also a treat to see past members reliving their happy times at the club. It was an afternoon not to be forgotten. The club celebrated this unique occasion in style!"





In time for the big day, croquet members opened a new £12,000 pavilion with modern facilities, funded partly by £3,000 from the Croquet Association.

Chapter Seven

2014-2023

'We have decided to call ourselves Kenilworth Tennis, Squash and Croquet Club. We must not stand still. Small changes arising from members' suggestions can and will be implemented quickly e.g. the coffee machine, which is proving to be very popular.'

2014

A dip in tennis membership mirrored a national decline and the tennis section addressed this by taking part in Great British Tennis Weekends. This year's coincided with a croquet open day.

However, juniors continued to make their mark, beating players from clubs which had LTA performance funding. The club had the highest



number of participants of all 75 clubs in Warwickshire at the county closed championships.

Around 90 children regularly turned up to Friday junior nights and 1,500 flyers were sent to schools to publicise tennis opportunities at the club. A fourth men's team was entered into the Coventry league, enabling more junior participation in adult tennis. Pictured here are children taking part in team training at the start of the season.

Squash was riding high: the men's first team won the Warwickshire Squash League for the first time in many years. There were four men's teams and two women's teams in the county league as well as 22 internal squash leagues and 12 racketball leagues. Five hundred children at local schools enjoyed wielding a racket on the coaching team's inflatable squash court. Sarah-Jane Perry was part of the England team which won the gold medal at the World Team Squash Championships.

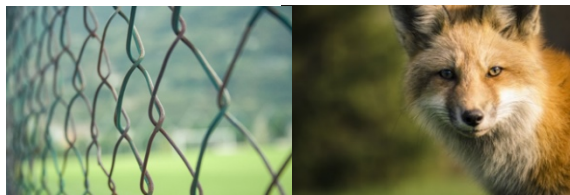
Life was eased by the installation of a squash token machine - no more having to buy in advance!

Ciao! The local twinning association was entertaining guests from Sicily and where better to do so than on our croquet lawns? 'There were few of us who could speak both languages so most communication was conducted through hand signals but it all added to the enjoyment.'

It was now permissible to send mass electronic communications and we bagged the domain name ktscc.co.uk. However, it would have cost up to £10,000 to employ a firm to set up and maintain a website so it was down to club members to launch one instead.

2015 and 2016

All hands to the pump! Behind the scenes, a never-ending stream of jobs was, and still is, needed to keep the club ticking over: tree pollarding, hedge trimming, mowing, moss control, fencing repairs, boiler and shower maintenance, work on slippery decking, fire safety, electrical



checks, bar maintenance and dealing with foxes to name but a few, not to mention endless paperwork.

The coffee machine was so popular that a larger one was installed after a number of tasting trials.

The croquet section opened their 2015 season 'with a flourish' at the Spring Trophy Fun Open Day followed by a cream tea. Businesses attended several corporate events on the lawns.

The tennis show courts, 8 and 9, converted to artificial grass in 2002-2003, were replaced after 13 years of service. Along with the repainting of hard courts 6 and 7, the project cost £72,151 including a £28,995 grant from Warwick District Council.

World Squash Day in 2015 coincided with the England v Uruguay Rugby World Cup match so there was plenty of activity on the courts and in the bar.

Also due a cheer were Sarah-Jane Perry, who became British Squash Champion in 2015 and young AbdAllah Eissa, who was making his mark on the national scene. The club women's team repeated their success of 2013 by being runners-up in the National Club Championships.

The Kenilworth Junior Squash Open attracted 70 players from as far afield as Yorkshire and Jersey. In 2016, a grant of £1,368 was obtained from Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Sport to set up a programme for 18-24 year old women, several of whom came from Jaguar Land Rover.

A good source of income for the squash section was sponsorship of the tins, which brought in £1,375 in 2015 and £2,000 in 2016.

Looking to the future, a scheme was presented to members for a major expansion of the clubhouse to possibly include a further function room and gym. With so many other demands for cash however, such ambitious projects did not come to fruition.

In the end, plans were set in motion for a refurbishment of both lounges including the re-opening of the lower bar, which had been closed for some time.

The work took place towards the end of 2016/early 2017 and a modern look was achieved with new seating, tables and carpeting.



If people in Kenilworth did not know about the club, they did now! In November 2016, a sign was put up at the junction of Crackley Lane and Coventry Road.

2017

The ladies veterans (over 40s) tennis team were enjoying an extraordinary run of form. With the same captain and nucleus of players, they had won the Warwickshire Veterans League six out of 10 times in recent years. As a reward for their efforts, they scooped the Warwickshire LTA Club Team of the Year award at a ceremony at Villa Park. Pictured are Mel Jennings, Kay Tomalin, Kay Gebbels (captain), Kate Perkins, Caroline Rhodes, Philippa Middup and Linda Clements. Some had been members since they were juniors and several were now representing (and would go on to captain) county teams in the various veterans age groups. Proving that tennis is a sport for life, they continued to be a key part of an active ladies' section which to this day rounds off the season with the annual supper.



Here's a picture of a typical evening floodlit scene at the popular Monday men's night.

Squash matches of the highest calibre were coming to Kenilworth. With the University of Warwick, the club formed a partnership (WarKens) enabling entry into the PSL, the Premier Squash League, a tournament organised by England Squash in which clubs could battle for the title of national champion. This



was made possible by the new show court; however a further glass-backed court was needed so the squash section set about raising the money. On a weekend coinciding with the Six Nations Rugby, Steve Townsend, followed on Facebook Live, ran a marathon - 4,328 lengths of a court in five hours, 58 minutes. Together with other activities including an exhibition match (pictured), £4,500 was raised for the club and research into Alzheimer's Disease. The PSL matches brought in £3,500 in bar takings within a few weeks. Other successes saw Sarah-Jane Perry firmly in the world's top 10, Natalie Townsend playing for England over-35s, Guy Pearson enjoying 120 consecutive wins and the ladies winning the Warwickshire league.

For some time now, the club had been moving towards an integrated IT system for membership, bookings and door entry. As it neared completion, a volunteer at the helm said he just 'wanted to lie in a dark corner to recover.'

The croquet section took part in a successful National Croquet Day. There were now 58 members and a link was set up with the University of Warwick to encourage student use at £5 per play.

Following the clubhouse refurbishment, a new social committee was formed with members enjoying a summer Dine and Dance, a casino night, a skittles evening and quizzes. Another 200 club was launched.

2018

At the start of 2018, club membership stood at 779, the highest since 2001. The fiscal position was 'solid and sound' and with 1,000 new homes being planned for Kenilworth, the future in terms of membership looked very promising.

All eyes were on squash star Sarah-Jane Perry (pictured right) in 2018 when she reached the singles final of the Commonwealth Games in Australia, picking up a silver medal. She was also part of the England team which won silver at the Women's World Team Squash Championships.

Young AbdAllah Eissa won the U13 Dutch Junior Open and his sister Mariam won the U11 category at the English Junior Championships.



Back at the club, the entire squash balcony had a makeover, with new carpeting, furniture and exercise bikes, providing 'modern, bright and attractive facilities that we can be very proud of.'

Participation in the Premier Squash League brought a 'real buzz,' with world-class players attracting the crowds.



Outside, four of the tennis courts had seen better days and were therefore refurbished with the help of a substantial grant from Warwick District Council. All nine courts were now in tip-top condition.

The junior tennis section continued to thrive, with the club having the highest number of entries in the Warwickshire County Closed tournament.

One of the club's young stars, Marina Beckinsale (pictured left), who was representing the ladies' first team, won the Coventry and District League Junior Player of the Year Award. Grace Gamble won it three years later.



Here's a sunny picture of croquet players at a West Midlands Federation Association game at Eardisley in Herefordshire in June 2018. Kenilworth's Philip Wood, Cliff Daniel and Alan Richardson competed against Roy Knowles, Tony Johnston and Tom Tibbits. Kenilworth lost the three-round encounter but enjoyed a warm welcome in a rural location.

2019

Group photo, everyone? Gather round....a bit closer now! Who would have thought that 2019 would be the last year for some time that this end-of-day ritual would be allowed?



AbdAllah Eissa (left) enjoyed a highlight of his junior career when he won the U13 British Junior Open, considered the second most prestigious after the World Junior Squash Championships. Sister Mariam became U11 English junior champion and U11 Dutch Junior Open champion. Both were coached and mentored by dad Ahmed.

The squash section was 'balanced and well managed,' hosting visitors for an England Squash event and World Squash Day. Squash and racketball teams had a boost with sponsorship from MJC Construction.

With continuing success around Britain and the world, coach Steve Townsend reflects: "It's hard to conceive how a small town could produce such a level of player over and over again.

"We'll look back on this era and think how lucky we were and how on Earth did we do it?"



Tennis players are pictured here starting their summer season with a busy and sociable Captains' Day, open to senior and junior players. Also in 2019 year there was a repeat of the 2007 visit to Kenilworth's twin town Eppstein - this time it was organised for a group of juniors. Eleven children and four adults enjoyed a weekend of tennis, a visit to the castle and a duck race.

Mark Campbell has sent in this picture of racketball players enjoying a Christmas event in 2019 - no masks or social distancing needed!



Little did club juniors know that the party would soon be over...



2020 and 2021

Just before we were confined to our homes due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the annual ladies' tennis dinner took place at Ego in Kenilworth. The teams were in the middle of an enjoyable winter season with new shirts sponsored by Jonathan Holland Architects. It was to be the last supper for a while.

General Secretary Chris Scott remembers the unprecedented time - there were three national lockdowns - as one of the most difficult in the club's history. Committee members met online to discuss guidance from sports governing bodies. Each time play was resumed, it was with the on-court protocols of social distancing and hand gel; the bar re-opened with cashless payments, minimal glass contact and protective equipment for staff, who returned after furlough.

Next slide please... With competitions cancelled, club juniors turned their efforts to raising money instead. Ollie Roe and Connor Checketts, due to play in the under-14 county cup in 2020, joined a team running challenge, raising money for NHS Covid-19 charities, completing 169.79 miles. Meanwhile, Kenilworth youngsters due to join the under 9, 10, 11 and 12 county cup teams, instead held a tennis 'marathon hit' in aid of the LTA partner charity the Down's Syndrome Association. They were Amelie, Benji, Ben, Emily, Evie, Henry, Jiho, Reuben, Ryan, Sam and Theo. This montage was on the JustGiving site.



Before lockdown in 2020, talented squash player Mariam Eissa, pictured here with her family, became runner-up at the U11 British Junior Open. In 2021, she won the U13 English Juniors while brother AbdAllah was runner-up in the U17s.



After the first lockdown, tennis and croquet resumed first but squash players had to wait for several more weeks and even then needed to be careful about their style of play due to social distancing rules. Chris Scott comments further: "The relief of being able to get back to play sport was something which will remain large in the memory of many. This saw people join to play tennis who had perhaps not realised the joys...the swelling of tennis membership was very much noted along with squash and racketball styles observed on our courts. As is the resilience of the club, we came through the Covid pandemic intact."

2022

Sporting life resumed and there were so many champions this year that it is difficult to know where to start! Here's a picture showing Kenilworth players celebrating after winning the West Midlands Golf Croquet League. The team won their final



two matches away at Broadwas and home to Church Stretton. Captain Philip Wood, Mervyn Harvey, Phil Mander and Phil Blake received the trophy from our own Adrian Morris, the West Midlands chair.



It was party time, with a bake-off, after Sarah-Jane Perry won a bronze in the squash singles and a silver in the doubles at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

AbdAllah Eissa (U17) and sister Mariam (U15) became British squash champions; both also played for Team England in the European Championships. Pictured below are top club juniors preparing for national action.



Twenty-six years after they last won the Coventry and District Lawn Tennis League, the ladies' tennis first team did it again. In a sweltering end to the season, they finished top of the Premier division with 47 out of 56 points. Earlier in the year, they won the Stratford Winter League and as a result of both victories were made Club Team of the Year by Warwickshire LTA. The two squads comprised Laura Wilkins, Nicola Jennings, Marina Beckinsale, Grace Gamble, Katie Wainhouse, Kate Perkins, Mel Jennings (captain), Linda Clements, Sheila Vaughan, Hannah Kingston and Carolyn Lindsay.



The pictures show team members after the final home match and sharing a few laughs as they return from one of their well-earned wins.

2023

So, here we are, 60 years after the clubhouse opened in Crackley Lane on 5th May 1963 following the move from Queens Road where the club was founded in 1901. There is so much to celebrate as we enjoy another milestone. Here are some highlights of the Diamond Jubilee Year so far!



Youngsters from Sherbourne Fields School in Coventry embarked on tennis lessons through a collaboration with Bright Ideas for Tennis, a charity aimed at helping children with disabilities. They formed an immediate rapport with coach Thomas Walton and volunteers.



In the next major project for the club, two padel courts were built and ready for play in July. Padel, an outdoor doubles game with stringless bats in which the ball bounces off walls, was by now a fast-growing sport. Here are enthusiasts at the first taster session.

The Eissa siblings won deciding rubbers in key international squash competitions. Mariam is pictured representing a winning U15s Team England in the European Championships in Prague. One month previously, the English junior champion had helped the team to the U15 Five Nations championship in Edinburgh. Meanwhile, brother AbdAllah also represented the victorious Team England in the U19 European Championships in Zurich.



Running Hoops, the extensive croquet section newsletter, is a gem which reflects the enthusiasm and good humour of the dedicated band of players.

Don't miss the regular editions on the group's website!

Thank you!

That's all for the moment but there will be pictures of the Diamond Jubilee celebration to come. Keep looking online! Grateful thanks are due to everyone who has taken time to submit valuable information, compile copy, email and text anecdotes, pictures and memories and offer help with technical issues.

The stacks of paper minutes and other historical records, maintained so assiduously over the decades by past and present committee members, will now be returned to the club cellar! Records are kept electronically nowadays and in the future will no doubt come in useful for whoever keeps our history alive.

It has been a privilege to belong to the club and the tennis section since I first arrived at Crackley Lane on my bike in 1985 to be welcomed by Tony and Kitty Jennings, club stalwarts of the highest order! I hope you have all enjoyed sharing your entertaining memories and reading about our incredible history.

Melanie Jennings 2023

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