

# THE FIRST 100 YEARS

A potted history by

**Simon Bird**

## **ST ALBANS LAWN TENNIS CLUB**

### **THE FIRST 100 YEARS**

#### **A VIEW FROM THE PATIO**

In order to fully appreciate the excellent facilities and atmosphere which we have at the Club today, it is interesting to look back on what has made us what we are. It has been fascinating to go back through the Club's minutes, starting in a bygone age and tracking the Club's progress to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. From quill pen to the palmtop, from long white 'whites' to a more colourful era, from the horse to the fuel-injected car. What has however remained constant over the 100 years are the personalities involved and the dedication of certain individuals to run your Club on a purely voluntary basis because they want to, not because they have to - they know who they are. It has been a team effort both on and off the court.

My thanks to an unnamed individual who wrote a short synopsis of the Club during its Hillside days. I have plagiarised some of their work but added bits which may be of more quirky interest to someone reading it in 2004 than when it was first written. Hindsight is a wonderful thing and I am sure some of today's activities will be seen as 'quirky' in the not too distant future.

I am sure the Club will be around for the next 100 years and if anyone would like to supply any additional anecdotes or stories I will place them in a time capsule for the next fortunate individual who will no doubt have to read and decipher minutes covering the past 200 years rather than a mere 100 !

Thanks for your interest and enjoy your tennis,

**Simon Bird**  
**Chairman**

**November 2004**

## **ST ALBANS LAWN TENNIS CLUB**

This Club is the oldest tennis club in St Albans and as we are now in our centenary year, it is perhaps a good opportunity to summarise the most interesting facts in our 100 year existence. St Albans Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club started in humble beginnings in Hillside Road (now part of Maple School). Tennis was played there between 1905 and 1968 before moving to the current site in Jersey Lane.

The initial recorded meeting to discuss the setting up of the Club took place in August 1904. A circular had been sent the previous month to local residents (**see 'A' attached**) to ascertain if there was sufficient interest saying "It is proposed to form a Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club and, if space permits, to reserve a part of the ground for Archery". Promises of membership were received from 197 individuals and it was decided that the estimated annual income of £180 would be "sufficient revenue to carry on the Club". The Club was then incorporated in late November 1904.

Play started the following year in June 1905. The first bye-laws make for interesting reading (**see 'B' attached**). The Club was open from the first Saturday in May to the last in September. Play started at 2 p.m. and there was no play on Sundays. No members under 15 or dogs were allowed. There were four grass tennis courts and two grass croquet lawns. Membership was around about 200 in total and subscriptions were £1 1s 0d for playing members and 7/6d for non-playing members.

The following year a joining fee of £1 1s 0d. was introduced for new members but it was by no means certain new applicants would be accepted. The committee aimed to keep more or less an equal balance between male and female members. Rules were always very strictly enforced and anyone wishing to resign had to do so in writing to the Secretary before 1<sup>st</sup> April each year, otherwise their resignation was not accepted and payment of the annual subscription was insisted upon. 1906 also saw the start of the Club Championship Tournaments.

An interesting item that appears each year in all the early accounts (**see 'C' attached**) is an item starting at £5 5s 0d but increasing slightly throughout the years for "horse hire". One can well visualise, in that more leisurely and spacious age, the horse with hooves muffled in sacking, patiently plodding up and down harnessed to the Club's heavy roller.

In February 1912 the Club became affiliated to the LTA.

Inevitably there was some falling off in membership during the First World War and there was difficulty in finding people who could spare the time to run the Club efficiently, but apart from that the Club seems to have prospered much as before. The strict subscription rules were relaxed for those members absent on active service who were made honorary members during their absence.

1923 saw the beginning of the decline of the croquet section. By this time there were only 10 croquet members left and one of their two lawns was converted to tennis. No more mention of croquet is made in the Minutes and it is safe to assume it died out

# Proposed Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club

## Proposed Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club.

### PROVISIONAL COMMITTEE.

THE VERY REV. THE	M. T. HODDING, Esq.
DEAN OF ST. ALBANS.	J. B. HUGHES, Esq.
LADY SCOTT.	DR. E. B. LITSCOMBE.
REV. F. W. ADYE.	W. ROSS-LEWIN LOWE,
ROGER BASS, Esq.	Esq.
H. LESLIE BATES, Esq.	C. MORRIS, Esq.
A. H. BOYS, Esq.	EDWARD SCOTT, Esq.
W. CAREY MORGAN, Esq.	REV. R. A. SQUIRES.
T. COOPER, Esq.	E. N. VIX, Esq.
DR. W. COULTER.	C. WOOLLAM, Esq.
REV. G. H. P. GLOSSOP.	

DEAR SIR, OR MADAM,

It is proposed to form a Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, and, if space permits, to reserve a part of the ground for Archery.

The option of purchase of a piece of land in the Hillside Road, suitable for the purposes of such a Club, has been obtained.

Some six or seven Tennis Courts and two or three Croquet Courts will be laid out.

It is proposed to make arrangements for enabling tea and light refreshments to be obtained by members and their friends.

[P.T.O.]

The subscriptions contemplated are £1 1s. for playing members, 7s. 6d. for non-playing members, £1 1s. each for the first two of one family, and 10s. 6d. each for all over two—without entrance fee in the case of original members.

If sufficient promises of membership are obtained a syndicate will be formed forthwith for the purpose of acquiring the above-mentioned land.

It should be clearly understood that this land, which must be purchased at once, will only be acquired if sufficient support is forthcoming. Will you, therefore, kindly fill in and forward me the annexed form at your earliest possible convenience?

I am,  
Yours faithfully,  
R. H. WHITWORTH,  
*Hon. Sec. (pro tem).*

HEM VILLA,  
UPPER LATTIMORE ROAD,  
ST. ALBANS.  
20th July, 1904.

(A)

10

# ST. ALBANS Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club, LIMITED.

## BYE-LAWS.

- Election.** 1. Nominations for election as Members of the Club are to be made by sending to the Hon. Secretary, in writing, the names and addresses of the proposed Members, signed by two Members, as proposer and seconder. Proposed Members must be personally known to their proposers and seconders, who, in the case of lady candidates, are to be lady Members of the Club. The names of all Members thus proposed will be submitted to the Committee, who may, without assigning any reason, decline to elect. A list of the Members of the Club shall be posted in the pavilion.
- Playing Members.** 2. The subscription to the Club shall be £1 ls. yearly for playing Members. Such Members may play Tennis and Croquet and exercise all other rights of membership. Subscriptions shall fall due on the 1st May. Members joining after the third Saturday in July of any year after 1905 shall pay a subscription of 10s. 6d. for the season. When more than two of one family permanently resident in one house become playing members the subscription shall be £1 ls. each for the first two, and 10s. 6d. each for all over two.

12

- Temporary Residents.** 11. The Committee may allow temporary residents in St. Albans to use the Club for three months, on payment of their subscriptions for the current year without Entrance Fee.
- Matches.** 12. The Match Committee shall arrange and manage tournaments and matches, and the decision of such Match Committee on all points shall be final.
- Tennis Shoes.** 13. Tennis shoes to be worn by all players when playing. Shoes with spikes will not be allowed.
- Order of Play.** 14. All sets must be made up before taking possession of a court, and at the end of each set the players shall leave the court, and shall not commence a new game while any other Member wishes to play. Players cannot transfer their game from one court to another, but must finish the set in the court in which they begin.
- Age Restriction.** 15. No one will be admitted as a Member under the age of 15 unless under special circumstances to be decided by the Committee.
- Dogs.** 16. Dogs are not to be brought on the ground.
17. A copy of these Rules shall be sent to all Members with a letter informing them of their election.

11

- Non-Playing Members.** 3. The subscription of non-playing Members shall be 7s. 6d. Such Members may exercise all the rights of membership, except that of playing and voting.
- Withdrawal from Club.** 4. Any Member who has not given notice, in writing, to the Hon. Secretary, before the 1st April, of his or her intention of leaving the Club shall be considered a Member for the ensuing season, and shall be liable for his or her subscription.
- Entrance Fee.** 5. After September 29th, 1905, there shall be an entrance fee of £1 ls. for new Members. No such Member shall be entitled to use the Club ground until the entrance fee has been paid.
- Season.** 6. The season shall commence on the first Saturday in May, and cease September 29th, unless otherwise ordered by the Committee.
7. Play shall commence at 2 p.m. There shall be no play on Sundays.
- Visitors.** 8. A Member introducing a visitor for the purpose of playing shall enter the name of the visitor in a book, to be kept by the ground-man, and shall pay to the Club the sum of 1/- on ordinary days, and 2/- on Saturdays and Bank Holidays.
9. No visitor will be allowed to play Tennis on Saturdays or Bank Holidays to the exclusion of a Member of the Club.
10. No Member may introduce a resident in St. Albans as a visitor for the purpose of playing.

(15) On Tuesdays any number may,  
by previous arrangement with the Hon  
Secy, have the exclusive use of the ground  
on payment of £1 1/- Notice must be  
given to the Hon. Secy. of wish to engage  
the ground at least seven days previous.  
Members engaging the ground as  
above and requiring any special  
preparation shall bear any extra  
expense occasioned thereby.

46

(C)

## St. Albans Lawn Tennis &amp; Croquet Club, Limited.

## CAPITAL ACCOUNT.

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
3% Debenture Stock .....	1580	0	0	Purchase of Club ground ..	1100	0	0
				Levelling & Making Courts ..	385	17	11
				Roller .....	13	10	9
				Mower .....	5	14	11
				Hose, tools, &c. ....	6	18	5
				Legal Expenses .....	10	10	0
				Registering Company .....	23	19	11
				Water and laying service ..	5	3	10
				Laying Gas service .....	8	7	6
				Chairs .....	5	4	0
				Balance to general a/c. ....	9	12	8
	£1580	0	0		£1580	0	0

## BALANCE SHEET to Feb. 1st, 1906.

RECEIPTS.	£	s.	d.	EXPENDITURE.	£	s.	d.
Subscriptions .....	223	11	0	Interest on Debenture Stock	28	3	4
211 Playing Members.				to July 31st, 1905 .....			
31 Non-playing Members				Income Tax on £28 3s. 4d. ....	1	9	9
Visitors .....	5	3	0	Wages from May 8th, 1905,	69	8	0
Mrs. Bates (part proceeds				to Feb. 27th, 1906 .....	13	13	8
of Entertainment) .....	20	0	0	Tennis Nets, posts, &c. ....	3	17	3
Balance of Capital a/c .....	9	12	8	Croquet sets, &c. ....	14	9	7
				Fence to entrance road .....	3	0	0
				Rates .....	1	6	6
				Water .....	5	16	4
				Printing .....	6	6	2
				Stamps .....	5	5	0
				Horse hire .....	0	10	0
				Workmen's Insurance .....	0	11	6
				Loss on Ball a/c .....	26	9	5
				Sundry a/cs and petty ex-	85	0	2
				penses .....			
				Cash at bank .....			
	£258	6	8		£258	6	8

C. A. BENNETT,  
Auditor.R. H. WHITWORTH,  
Hon. Sec.

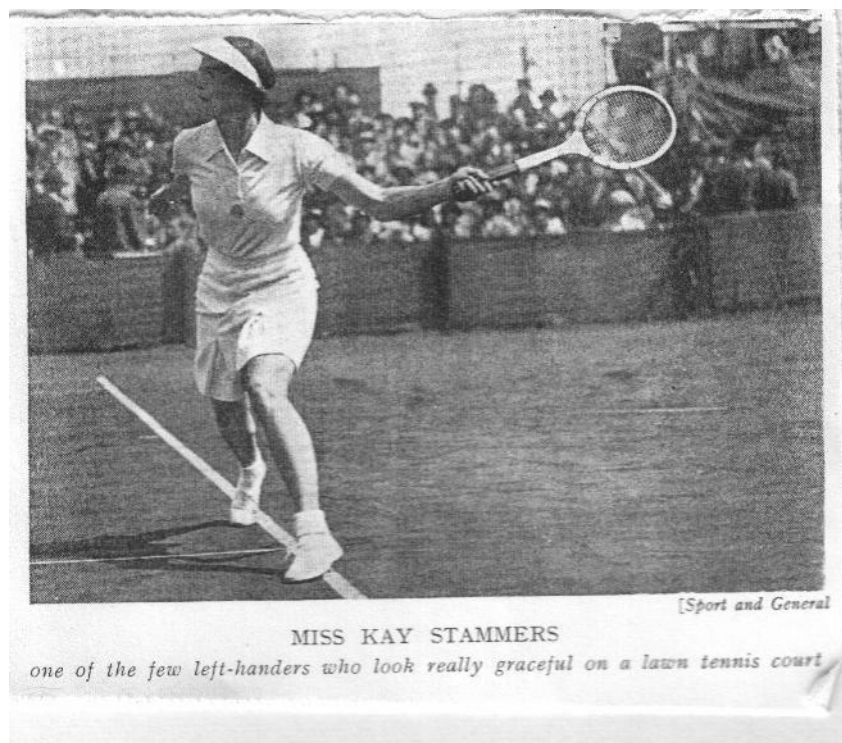
## PAVILION FUND.

	£	s.	d.
Cash at Bank .....	33	5	6
Subscriptions promised .....	2	16	0
Promised against Debenture Stock ..	33	0	0
Estimated amount from General a/c. ....	30	0	0
Total .....	£101	2	6

shortly after this. It was however not until 1999 that the “and Croquet Club” was dropped from the Club’s full title.

The Club began to feel the need for its own hard courts and in 1926 the first of two were constructed. In 1933 an amendment to the Deeds was sought to allow play on Sundays and in 1934 a licence was sought to “enable intoxicating liquor to be sold on Sundays”.

Undoubtedly the Club’s most famous member was Miss Kay Stammers who was England’s No1 player in the period before the Second World War. A left hander, she was, apparently, “one of the most graceful players, always a delight to watch”. As a youngster she won the Ladies Singles and the Ladies Doubles in the Club’s Championships before going on to greater things **(see ‘D’ attached)** and in 1937 she was elected an honorary member of the Club in recognition of her achievements in international tennis.



*From the book 'Perry on Tennis' by Fred Perry*

Much the same difficulties were encountered in running the Club during the Second World War as were encountered during the First. However, the club ran into serious financial difficulties when the membership fell due to the War - it was not possible to keep the grounds in good repair and at the same time pay interest on loans. The problem seems to have arisen as the Club had initially been financed by the issue of debentures to members, which had been increased over the years to pay for further ground improvements. Interest was due on these debentures which the Club could not afford to pay. An EGM was held in September 1940 when the Club’s problems were explained to the members and debenture holders. The Club nearly collapsed but thankfully still exists today because of the debenture holders agreeing to waive their interest for the duration of hostilities “if that would be the means of keeping the Club going” **(see ‘E’ attached)**.

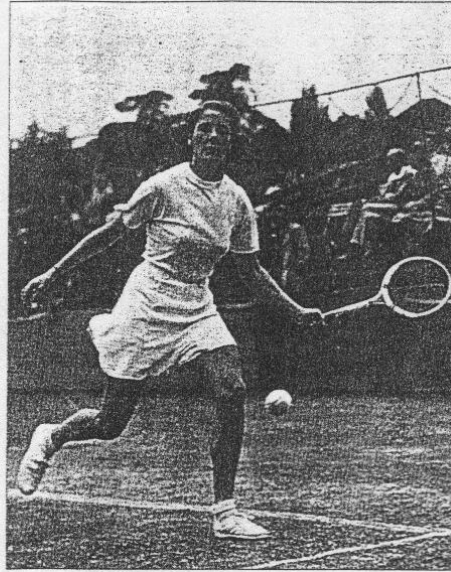
The early thirties was the time of this country's finest hour in the history of lawn tennis, for this was the decade in which English players won every title at Wimbledon, and many in other parts of the world.

Making her first appearance at Wimbledon in 1931, came Herts dazzling star, Miss Kay Stammers, now Mrs Bullitt. This young lady truly possessed everything, for she had film star good looks, played exciting attacking tennis, and had an ideal temperament to match these qualities. Surely the Jewel in the Crown of Herts tennis since the game began. Her record would justify a publication of its own, for she performed brilliantly in all parts of the world. At home she won the Ladies Doubles at Wimbledon on two occasions with Miss Freda James, in 1935/1936.

1939 she reached the final of the Ladies Singles at Wimbledon, and only lost to the great American, Miss Alice Marble, considered by many expert observers, as the finest player seen at Wimbledon up to that time. Miss Stammers played in five Wightman Cup matches against the U.S.A. and in addition in many International contests in all parts of the world.

It was inevitable that all talk of tennis in Herts has always been, and indeed still is, about this brilliant young lady, who brought such credit and fame to her County, and her country. She could well have been considered unlucky, for she was at the height of her career when war broke out, and but for that break in the playing of tennis, she might have won Wimbledon.

(D)



Britain's very attractive Kay Stammers (Mrs Menzies) reached the final of the singles at the 1939 Wimbledon, beating Miss Helen Jacobs (USA) – who, in the absence of Mrs Helen Wills-Moody, was the top-ranked woman in the world – 6-2, 6-2. In the semi-final Kay beat Mrs Fabyan, but could only get two games against the fabulous Alice Marble in the final. Kay was also twice doubles champion at Wimbledon with Miss Freda James, and later captain of our Wightman Cup team.

Photograph by courtesy of Kemsley Pictures Service



Fox Photos

Kay Stammers (afterwards Mrs. Menzies). "... one of the prettiest and best-dressed stars ..." was beaten in the 1939 ladies' singles final by Alice Marble.

On her way to the finals, some of the English girls gave Alice plenty to do. For instance, there was Freda James, one of a bevy of young players who were playing first-class lawn tennis at that time. When Teach Tennant saw Freda in action against her protégée, she remarked: "That missy will sure leave some egg on Alice's face!" Between them, Alice Marble and Miss Tennant added considerably to my vocabulary of American slang.

In the 1939 final, Alice met another English girl who was one of Wimbledon's greatest favourites—Kay Stammers, who afterwards became Mrs. Menzies.

Kay was as pretty as a picture-book, the best-dressed star on the courts and as graceful as a ballet dancer, but this battery of qualities meant nothing to Alice Marble. She meant to win that championship, and she did, in spite of Kay's gallant fight. "I would rather have played Helen Moody," said Kay after the match; "Alice was unbeatable."

TOP: "Hertfordshire links with Wimbledon" by Jack Moore

BOTTOM: "Wimbledon Story" by Norah Cleather



# THE HERTS ADVERTISER

FRIDAY, APRIL 25, 1941

## ST. ALBANS LAWN TENNIS CLUB

### THE ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the St. Albans Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club was held at "St. Peter's," St. Albans, the residence of Mr. F. W. Hitchcock, on Monday.

Mr. R. B. Ogden, Chairman of the Club, who presided, gave a report on behalf of the Directors. He emphasised that the withdrawal of so many active members for service in the Army, Navy and Air Force, and in home defence organisations, necessitated the recruitment of many new members if the Club was to avoid getting into financial difficulties. Twenty-three new non-playing members had been obtained within the past two months, but there was room for many more playing members. Some temporary reconditioning of the hard courts was completed about three weeks ago, at an expenditure of nearly £40, but further work on these courts must be prepared for in the near future. He was sure all the members greatly appreciated the work which the new Hon. Secretary (Mr. I. Mark) was doing for the Club.

The accounts showed that the income exceeded the expenditure by £9 18s. 6d., but that happy result was only possible by the generosity of the debenture-holders in waiving the interest to which they were entitled, said the Chairman.

Mr. Geoffrey Humble, speaking for the principal debenture-holders, said the interest would not be expected to be paid for the duration of the war, if that would be the means of keeping the Club going.

Mr. Mark added a few words on the importance of enlarging the list of members and their subscriptions, and Mr. E. W. Hitchcock presented his report as Hon. Auditor and was re-elected for the ensuing year with thanks for his services.

Three Directors retired by rotation: Mr. R. B. Ogden, Miss Joan Gibson and Mr. Kenneth Mark. There being no other nominations, they were re-elected.

### A LIVE CLUB.

NOT every local lawn tennis club has had the experience of surviving one great war and now bids fair to survive another! but so much is claimed by the St. Albans Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, which was started in 1904.

Of the local "worthies" who combined to found this Club, a correspondent tells me, Mr. R. H. Whitworth (Hon. Secretary from 1904 to 1907) and Mr. H. S. Adey now live at a distance, and only Mr. Robinson are resident in St. Albans.

Included in the list of founders no longer living are Mr. J. A. Dickinson, Canon Glossop, Mr. W. T. Hoading, Dr. E. H. Lipscomb, Mr. W. E. Lowe, Mr. W. E. Martin, Mr. C. Morley, Mr. I. Ottaway, Mr. W. Reynolds, Mr. E. N. Wix, Mr. C. M. Humble.

The last named died last December. He was elected an honorary life member in 1930 in recognition of the valuable services he had rendered as Hon. Treasurer for 23 years. A similar honour was accorded to the late Mr. I. Ottaway, in 1937, when he resigned the Hon. Secretaryship, which he had held for 23 years.

### KAY.

ANOTHER honorary life member was elected in 1937, in recognition of her eminence in the world of lawn tennis—Miss Kay Stammers (now Mrs. Menzies)—who was nursed in the Club. She won the Club's mixed doubles, with Mr. D. H. Scott, in 1928, and the ladies' singles in 1931.

The Club's ground, lying between Hillside-road, Hall Place-gardens and Townsend-avenue, now accommodates six grass courts and two hard courts, which were used by eighty playing members during the past year.

## St. Albans' Oldest Club Carries On.

The oldest lawn tennis club in St. Albans (writes a correspondent) held the annual meeting of its members on Saturday in its pavilion after tea. The ground being approached from Hillside-road, the club is often referred to as "Hillside," though the full official name of "St. Albans Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club" was adopted in 1904. Croquet ceased some years ago, but lawn tennis flourishes.

Mr. R. B. Ogden presided at the meeting, and in the course of the Directors' report drew attention to the improved financial position—the subscriptions amounting to £245, compared with £198 in the previous year, the bank overdraft being reduced by £69 and £50 having been placed in reserve to pay for work on the courts after the close of the war.

Mr. C. F. W. Murray, as Treasurer, presented the accounts, which were approved and adopted, with a vote of thanks to Mr. R. E. Hitchcock, who was asked to accept appointment as Honorary Auditor for the ensuing year. Amid applause, the Chairman voiced the gratitude of the members to the Honorary Secretary (Mr. I. Mark) for the many hours which he had devoted to promoting the club's welfare and improving its financial position. Mr. Mark asked the members to be on the look-out for new members—both players and non-players—to fill the gaps caused by previous members leaving St. Albans to undertake some other of the many kinds of war work in which, of course, practically every member takes his or her part already. The meeting elected Mr. Ralph Worssam and Miss M. Barnard to fill vacancies in the Directorate.

By long-standing custom, the grass courts were reopened on the first Saturday in May, and were well occupied during the day. They—as well as the hard courts—will be better when rain has fallen. The work put in by the two emergency groundsmen has produced very creditable results.

It is interesting to note that in 1942 members were allowed to use the clubhouse during blackouts on weekends during the winter, the clubhouse having previously been shut throughout the winter months.

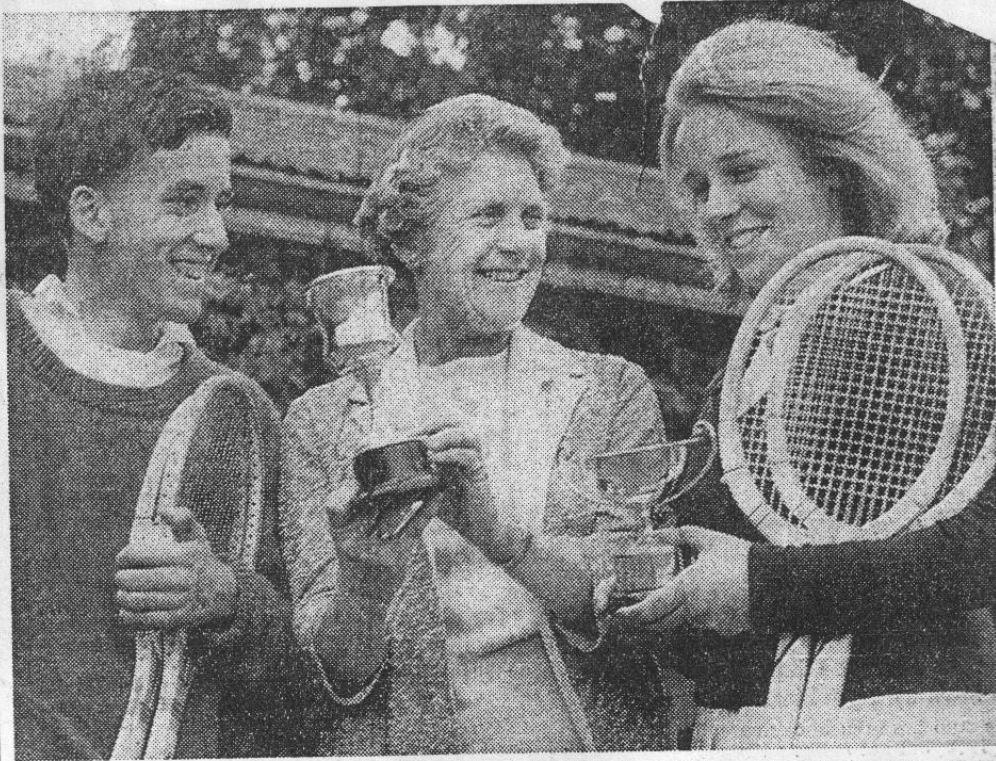
There seems to have been a change in attitude towards juniors shortly after the War. The age when juniors were admitted was reduced to 14 with discretion to admit even younger members “in approved cases”. Family membership discounts were introduced to “encourage the junior membership”. Other children were even allowed on the Club grounds if accompanied by an adult ! The minutes record that in 1948 a Mr Wortley and Peggie Hitchcock “introduced a highly successful Junior Tournament for the young members and their friends”. This tournament continues to this day. You can see some pictures of Peggie (***‘F’ attached***) from local newspapers in the 60’s – more about her later !

For some time after the war there was difficulty in obtaining replacements for nets, posts and for general repairs due to the lack of materials and expert labour. In 1947 two more hard courts were laid (cost £560) on top of two of the grass courts, again, financed by loans from members. It is incredible to find electric light was only brought to the clubhouse in 1953, the year of the Coronation. Before that there was no light in the dressing rooms and only a gas mantle in the main room and the kitchen. In 1951 “it was suggested that a candle and holder and a box of matches be provided for each changing room”.

It is interesting to note that even in the 50’s they struggled to find volunteers to man the bar and provide teas. It “proved well nigh useless to put up a list on the board ..... response has been negligible”. Some things never change !

As funds were short, the annual subscription dramatically increased from £2.15s in 1946 to £3.10s the following year, presumably on the back of the improved court facilities. In 1948, with the new hard courts, winter tennis was introduced. Perhaps surprisingly, juniors were not allowed to play winter tennis until 1965 when the junior membership began to fall. However, due to the lack of any floodlighting winter tennis was obviously limited.

Generally in the early 50’s, the Club regularly came close to the overdraft limit of £100 (guaranteed by certain members) – everything was carefully costed and there were no extravagancies.



At the St. Albans Junior Tennis Tournament finals (left to right): boys singles winner Brian Gray (16) of Waltham Cross; Miss M. J. Hitchcock, of Hall Place Gardens, St. Albans, the event organiser, and Carolyn Dunning (17), of Battlefield Road, St. Albans, winner of the girls singles and doubles.



Above: Miss Margaret Hitchcock, secretary and referee at the record-breaking 22nd St Albans Junior Open Tournament, at St Albans L.T.C. on Saturday.

## 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations !



In the summer of 1954 the Club celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and a Dinner Dance was held. A number of official guests were invited including as many of the original members who could be found. Mrs Menzies (formerly Kay Stammers) was guest of honour. A number of entertainments were organised at the Club but unfortunately these had to be curtailed on account of the weather. However there was a costume parade, some croquet and a game of tennis played in the fashions of 1904. Kay Stammers presented prizes for the best costume.

From 1951 until 1957 the poor quality of the grass courts seems to have caused an annual reduction in membership which resulted in a shortage of funds for ground improvements. At an EGM held in 1955 the Committee said they were seriously disturbed by the declining and high turnover of membership and the deterioration of the sound financial position which had been built up during the past few years. It therefore seems surprising that in 1954 a playing-in test was first introduced for those over 18, although the reasoning seems to be that they considered falling standards of tennis had partly contributed to the declining membership - there was no equivalent test for juniors whose numbers continued to increase.

In 1956 junior representatives were welcomed on to the Committee. In the same year a young Mr Charles Allistone was voted on to the Committee as the person responsible for, yes you guessed it, Grounds. A position he holds today !!

In 1959 the finances were described as “gloomy” and, to a large extent, the successful junior section provided a significant part of the Club’s income. The 1960’s saw problems experienced by most private Clubs, that of the rising cost of materials and labour for court repairs which could not be matched by increasing subscriptions. A number of fund-raising activities were organised to raise money for the Club – jumble sales, raffles, dances, car treasure hunts, cocktail parties and others. They even considered converting a grass court into two squash courts which must have been a revolutionary concept at that time, a decade before the 70’s boom, but funding proved impossible so the idea was dropped.

In 1962 Peggie Hitchcock, who had been on the Committee continually since 1940 and who many of the current members will remember, was appointed Secretary of the Club after 10 men had declined the position. She agreed to “take on the job for one year on a trial basis” (which was actually to last for 15 years !). Also in the same year, the playing in test was abandoned (later reintroduced in 1970) and the Club agreed to give membership to “a limited number of inexperienced players”.

It was obvious that a better clubhouse was needed with changing facilities but the “cost of the project was such that the Club would have been obliged to realise all its liquid assets and interest on loan repayments would have proved a crippling burden”. There appeared no way forward other than to continue a hand to mouth existence. Annual profits were around £100 per annum, hardly sufficient to plan court renewals let alone improvements.

It was announced at the 1965 AGM that the Council intended to build a primary school on the site in two years time. Despite protests and appeals, after 64 years at Hillside Road the Club were forced by compulsory purchase to start afresh at the “rather rural position “ in Jersey Lane.

Plans were put in place to purchase the land and an architect was employed to design “an attractive clubhouse, large enough to provide adequate changing space and facilities for social events on a scale not previously possible”.



The Club had to vacate the Hillside Road site in September 1968 and, as the Jersey Lane site was not yet ready, they hired 5 grass courts from the Council in Clarence Park. While development at Jersey Lane continued it was reported that “there had been difficulty in keeping horses off the property”. The 1969 and 1970 Junior Tournaments were held at Townsend LTC. In 1969 Peggie Hitchcock suggested “there should be a junior club evening on Fridays”, which continues to this day.

The Jersey Lane clubhouse was completed at the end of January 1971 and a sherry party was organised as part of the official opening ceremony, which took place on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1971. Residents of Rose Walk and Jersey Lane were invited (**see ‘G’ attached**). The grass courts came into use in June 1971. Initially there were 6 grass, 3 shale and 2 tennis quick courts.



## Debut at new courts

COMPETITION tennis made its debut at St Albans Club's new courts in Jersey Lane last week with the St Albans junior open tournament.

Over 100 players from four counties took part in the 25th tournament to be organised by the club. As in previous years, the under-14 singles was the most popular event.

St Albans youngster Martin Webb (pictured right) was beaten in the final 7-5, 6-1 by Keith Fletcher of Barnet, who also won the under-15 doubles with Steven Strange of St Albans.

**Dress and Jackets-Suits**  
**-Summer Dress for the well**  
**dressed woman at**  
**of George Street. FLAIRE**

## HERTS ADVERTISER

**WINE**  
 Six wine glasses £2.16, Cat  
 glasses £3.54, Dat  
**ARLOW**  
 12 George St

### It's 'love all' at

## Jersey Lane tennis club

THERE were objections when St Albans Lawn Tennis Club announced plans to build a new clubhouse and courts at Jersey Lane, Marshalswick, St Albans.

Neighbours wrote to the council opposing the club's application for planning permission, because "They thought they would be kept awake at nights by rowdies holding parties on the premises."

But everything has turned out happily, with an atmosphere of peace and harmony - in fact, as far as most are concerned it could be described as a love set!

The club officers started off with a public relations exercise.

#### DRINKS

To explain that they would not spoil the sleep of residents of Jersey Lane and nearby Rose Walk, the club members invited their neighbours to "drinks" at the clubhouse.

And after that, some of the neighbours joined the club.

"Residents objected when we announced our intention to build in Jersey Lane, but I think we have convinced the people we are sober and responsible and not a lot of rowdies," said the club chairman, Mr Bill Paterson.

"We explained that any social functions we held at the club would be finished by 11 pm and that they wouldn't be kept awake at nights by rowdy parties."

One of the residents who

joined the club, Mr David Morley, of 18 Rose Walk, said: "I have no objections to the club at all. I think it is a sensible addition to the amenities of the area."

A resident who was doubtful at first about the benefits of having a tennis club nearby was Mr Barry Peerless, of 4 Jersey Lane.

He said: "I objected to members parking their cars in our street. Many people use the road to avoid traffic lights at the junction of Marshalswick Lane and Sandpit Lane, and the tennis club cars didn't improve matters."

But he added: "The problem is not so bad now since the club installed its car park."

Many other residents had no objections to the club, and indeed now welcomed it there.

Mr Paul Gisborne, of 5 Jersey Lane is one who has reservations.

"Winter is the time when they will hold most of their social functions," he said. "We will have to wait and see what happens."

The club, which was formed in 1904, is one of the oldest in the county.



tions in St Albans. It moved to Jersey Lane in March from Clarence Park, St Albans.

Officials of the St Albans Tennis Club discuss the progress of their bank holiday tournament at their new site in Jersey Lane. Left to right: Mr Robert Graham, Moore, ladies, captain, and Mr Bill Paterson, the chairman. -HAB2050-2

(G)

A number of changes occurred in the early 70's relating to what could and could not be worn on court. In 1971 the minutes declare that the rule, "white dress and tennis shoes are to be worn by all members when playing" was not being adhered to. In 1972 "some members are still wearing track suits". That same year they changed the rule so that "dress" now included "cardigans and pullovers". Later that year the rule was again changed saying, "track suits may be worn in extremely unseasonal weather". In 1974 a member asked if coloured shirts could be worn but opinion sought from County came back as being unfavourable.

It seems a table tennis section was started in 1971 by Tony and Frances Wilkins. We had two teams and both were promoted in their first season. A third team was introduced in 1973.

At the 1972 AGM it was reported that damage to surrounding fences by members collecting lost balls had enabled horses to wander onto our grounds causing damage. The following year an electric fence was installed ! "The fence is not dangerous but would give a slight electric shock – members have been advised".

In 1973 there were 160 senior members and 75 juniors. Due to the capacity of the courts, only children of members were allowed to join unless they were of a very high standard (by 1974 the junior membership was full and no new junior members could join). They started a club night on Wednesday evenings for seniors during the summer "with cold suppers".

On a number of occasions in the early 70's the poor state of the shale and grass courts was brought up. The shale courts needed regular watering and rolling. The loose grit from these courts also caused a problem by being transferred to the "games room". By 1974 the state of all courts had given cause for concern to such an extent that the club sought the views of members through a questionnaire as to whether they would pay increased subs to fund a full time groundsman. Despite the answer being "no" over 200 fund raising ideas were put forward which resulted in the club taking on an experienced groundsman on a part time basis.





By 1975 the condition of the courts had improved and the three en-tout-cas shale courts had been resurfaced. The men's first team were promoted to the Championship Group in 1976 and the first and second ladies teams were both in the Intermediate Group. The first ladies team was promoted to the Championship Group the following year. This was possibly the Clubs overall peak in terms of team success.

Bill Pocock introduced Saturday morning coaching in 1977 for beginners and slightly advanced juniors. It seems that Bill's talents extended further than his coaching abilities – he wrote this poem among others :

TACTICS

'Tactics, my boy' said the kindly old man  
'Go on to the court with a tactical plan  
Work out in advance how to deal with his serve  
Try a topspin return to shatter his nerve.

Play wide to his backhand (a two-handed grip),  
In stretching to reach it, he'll probably slip.  
Do a sliced approach forehand; get up to the net,  
He'll see you advancing and panic, I'll bet.

Use your stop volley, remember he's slow,  
Move him about and keep the ball low.  
When you've won the first set, keep up your attack,  
A high topspin forehand will make him stay back.

Maintain the pressure and keep him pinned down,  
Then, wide to his forehand; oh! he'll look such a clown.  
His attempt to pass you, with disdain you'll dispatch,  
A final ace serve and its game, set and match.'

After the match the kindly old man  
Said to the youth, 'did you follow the plan?'  
'I tried,' said the player, 'but the plan was upset,  
I forgot about getting the ball over the net.'

**Can you spot the brave members who seem to be auditioning for "A Chorus Line" ?**



**Did you spot Robert Graham, Sidney Ratcliffe and Mike Hobbs ?**

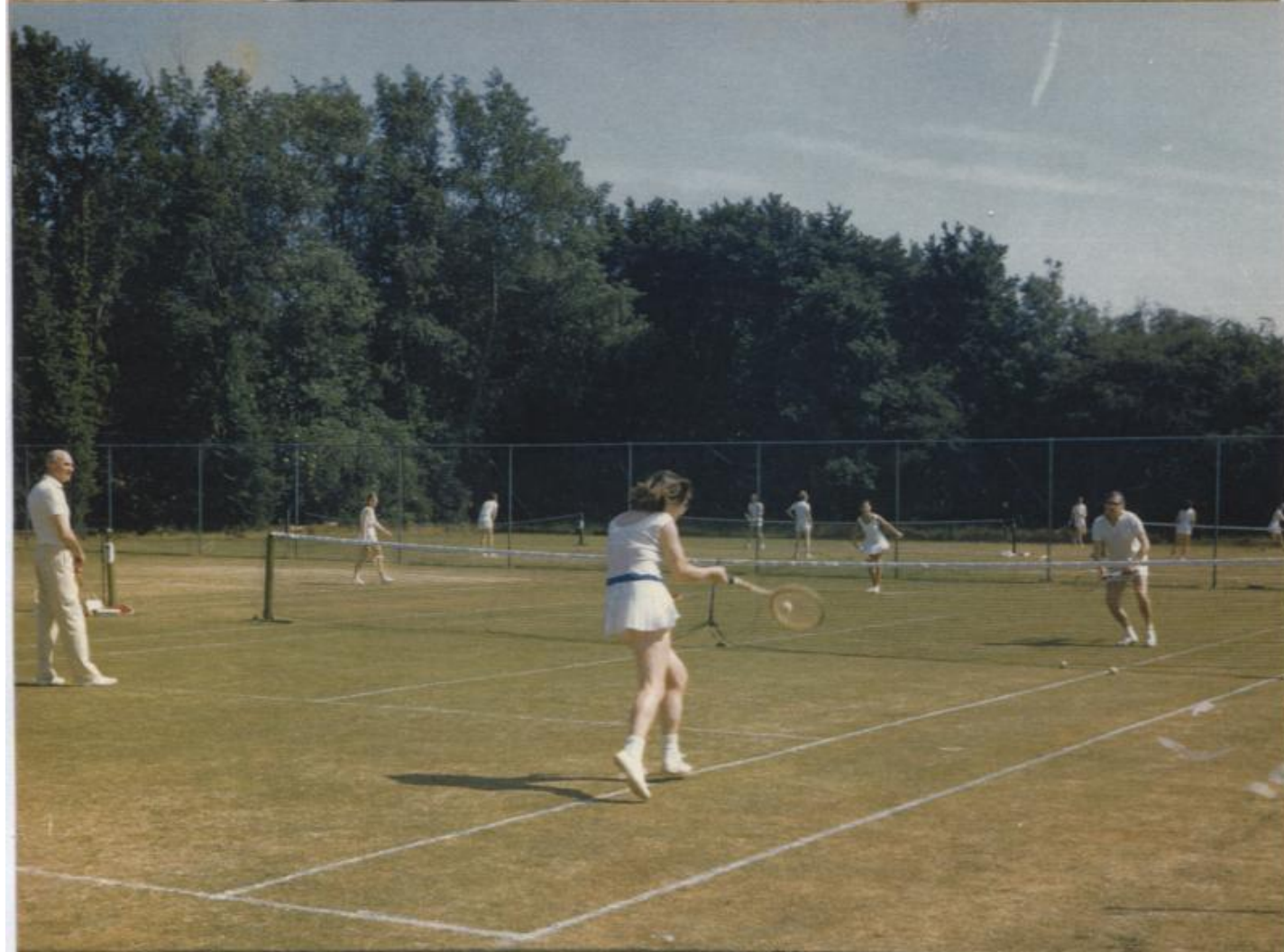
It seems that due to a lack of volunteers to help run the entertainment sub-committee, some of the regular seasonal events had to be cancelled. However, it was an exceptional year on the courts with the Ladies 1<sup>st</sup> team finishing runners up in the Championship Group and the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> teams winning all their matches in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisions. In 1978 the Ladies won the Championship Group and their team included both the Ladies County Grass Court Champion and the Ladies County Hard Court Champion. Quite an achievement.

Vintage tennis racquets were donated to the Club and put in the small lounge. The following year (1978) the minutes mention the use of yellow tennis balls in Watford League Matches rather than the white ones which "are easier to re-sell". In 1986, the year that yellow tennis balls were first used at Wimbledon, the club received advice from the LTA that balls for County League matches should be either all white or all yellow.

During the squash boom of the 70's there were many discussions and proposals to introduce squash courts on the Jersey Lane site. In 1978 there was much controversy when the Committee took the decision to ignore the wishes of a majority of members, who had responded to a survey, who seemed to be in favour of introducing squash. The committee took the view that those responding didn't reflect the views of the majority of club members. The squash option finally bit the dust in 1981 when a planning application was rejected due to the lack of car parking space.

The small lounge was redecorated and furnished (£130). Both children and animals were banned from using it.





The Club finances continued to be tight with subscriptions generally only increasing by inflation – an astounding 25% in 1980 ! It appears that the floodlighting system was in continual need of repair and doubts were expressed as to the amount of light given out by them. Problems continued with repairs needed to the tennisquickness and the grass courts. The temporary lack of a groundsman led to a motion being passed at the 1979 AGM “that every playing member be asked to do a minimum of 2 hours work on the grounds”.

A pool table was introduced into the main clubhouse area alongside the table tennis table.

In 1980 a “get together” was arranged in the clubhouse to celebrate 50 years of membership by Peggie Hitchcock. She was presented with a vase. Mention should be made that a similar celebration took place ten years later to celebrate her 60<sup>th</sup> year as a member (**see ‘H’ attached**). As far as we are aware this longevity of membership has never been surpassed, although we do today have a few members with over 50 years dedicated membership.

At the beginning of the decade the Club continued to be financed by interest free loans from members and a £1,000 bank overdraft. The lack of funds led to the shale courts “ailing” due to high maintenance costs and problems associated with drainage.

Dress became a hot topic again in 1983 and 1984. The Committee discussed the “adverse trends” and decided that blue shorts and skirts were not acceptable. The predominantly white rule remained, later to be refined to a very precise “2/3rds of every garment”. The 1983 AGM was dominated by the matter and in the following year the bye laws were changed so that players had to wear “tailored sports clothing suitable for tennis ..... at least two-thirds white”. (In 1991 the two thirds white rule was abolished and it was left “up to committee members to decide in individual cases”.)

In 1979 “a suggestion was made that synthetic carpet courts be considered” but it was not until 1984 that it was agreed, subject to raising funds, to convert the shale courts to “an all weather surface of high specification”. It would be some years before these dreams could become a reality.

In 1983 Bill Pocock stood down from the Committee after many years at the heart of the Junior Section. A Mr Tony Wilkins took over !

Finances gradually improved during the Thatcher years but it must be said that the Club continued to rely heavily on loans from members.

There was much excitement in May 1986 when Mark Cox and John Feaver attended the club on a Yamaha sponsored tennis clinic day. It seems that they catered for over 500 people but in the event around 200 turned up – still an excellent turn out. One unforeseen problem arose when they discovered that the Quadrant car park, which was to be used for overflow parking, was being used for a car boot sale that same day !

Telephone: (0727) 65166 for Advertising/Editorial

# Peggie's 60 years service to tennis

**CLASPING** a massive silver cup that is hers for ever, Peggie Hitchcock, doyen of St Albans Lawn Tennis Club, was quick to observe that so lavish a gift would be kept in a safe place.

It was the club's tribute, not only to a "match player par excellence" but to one who is high in the affection of her fellow-members.

She has played consistently good tennis since she first joined the club in 1930; not quite so much nowadays because of a back injury.

But over the years, her prowess earned her a total of 32 championship titles. She won the ladies singles 10 times — three times more than anyone else — and besides holding various offices in the club, she is one of the two life vice-presidents of Hertfordshire Lawn Tennis Association.

All of which is a rather formal introduction to a quite remarkable woman.

In the garden room of her home in Hall Place Gardens, St Albans, Peggie presided over the teapot.

She is a very young 77 and age has not dimmed her enthusiasms.

The Hitchcocks, it should be explained, are part of the history of St Albans.

Peggie was born in Grange House, Grange Street. The family moved from there to St Peter's House (now the site of the bus station) and then in 1944, to the house in Hall Place Gardens.

Peggie's father was a blancher and dyer and had a factory in Grange Street. Her grandfather, William Hitchcock, was Mayor of St Albans in



Peggie with her silver cup

## PROFILE

By RONALD RIGGS

the early part of the century and when Edward, her father, became Mayor in 1925, he presided over a council that included his father who had then become an alderman.

She was educated at Lyndale School and liked it so much that she returned to the school as a teacher. She taught English grammar, singing — and tennis — under three headmistresses until she retired in 1983 after 50 years.

In the thirties, tennis was a pretty starchy affair in St Albans. "No one could play on Sundays and that was because the lady who sold the club the land made it a condition that Sundays were to be kept sacred."

There was an almost angelic touch about the costume.

"We all wore white and when someone dared to appear in a coloured cardigan they were swiftly called to order."

Teas were elegantly served on trays with china and a teapot — that was a Mrs Faulder's province. The groundsman, Mr Cooper, was a character whose work could not be faulted.

Among the members was Kay Stammers, who quickly won fame and became a Wimbledon doubles champion.

Peggie's memory of tennis playing extends beyond her initiation into the Ladies Lawn Tennis Club. She said: "When I was 11 we had a private court at St Peter's House and my father, a keen tennis player, was an excellent teacher."

She was the sort of girl who could be

relied upon to save the situation. "They were playing a men's match and one of the first pair injured himself. Someone asked me: 'Would you mind being a man just for the afternoon and play two matches so that the other pairs get a game?'"

"Of course I agreed and my partner and I won our match which could not be included in the score."

Peggie said there seemed to be a general shortage of boys in the town before the war and St Peter's church recruited ladies to help out in the choir. She stayed in the choir for 42 years and is presently a sidesman and reads the lesson once a month. She is also chairman of the Ladies Guild of the church.

As for romance, Peggie confided: "I could have married but we didn't share the same interests and I grew up in such a

happy home that I felt I couldn't take the chance."

Surprisingly she smokes — but daintily. Although it can be a packet a day, she never inhales and says she does not regard herself as a serious smoker.

Peggie loves entertaining (she knocked up 300 sandwiches for one such occasion) and is also a compulsive traveller.

She has visited South Africa on eight occasions. Her friend, Norah Groby, a cousin of Kay Stammers, lives there. In St Albans Norah was a member of the tennis club.

On one such trip, Peggie's fellow-travellers on the Blue Train from Johannesburg to Cape Town included Eton John.

Peggie said: "I talked to some people who told me they were from Rickmansworth and Windsor. We had a nice conversation

and I was invited to join them for meals."

The penny didn't drop that in the party was Eton John. "To my shame I had to ask his name as I am not a pop fan."

Peggie and Eton (unmistakably) were photographed together and she has kept a menu card inscribed: "To dear Peggie, who made our trip from Johannesburg to Cape Town a richer experience — Eton."

That richer experience aptly describes an encounter with Peggie Hitchcock. "No wonder the club gave her the ladies singles cup to keep forever."

To perpetuate her name, a new cup for the ladies singles will be inscribed "The Peggie Hitchcock Davis and Jubilee Cup."

A fitting commemoration of 60 glorious years.





*Bill Pocock*

## SEAN SHINES IN EASTBOURNE

ON form St Albans LTC player Sean Wilkins was outstanding in last week's National Grass Courts Tennis Championships at Eastbourne.

Wilkins played superb tennis to beat Mark Patchey (Essex), recent winner of the under 14 National Championship event at Warwickshire, 6/2, 6/7, 6/4. Sean reached the third round of the under 16 boys before being eliminated. Prior to his arrival he had won at Cromer the under 16 boys singles, beating Mark Tomlinson (Middlesex) 6/1, 6/3 and losing in three sets to R. Hutchinson in the under 18 boys final.

Jane Pearson (Broxbourne) won the under 16 and under 18 girls singles and the award for player of the week in the same tournament. Alistaire Clarke, who recently scored 103 runs

### Tennis roundup

for Hertfordshire under 16 boys, and Mark Seymour (Radlett) proved their worth as a doubles pair when winning the under 18 Bournemouth boys doubles, beating two national players J. Miller and J. Green 6/4, 7/5.

On their way to this final they beat a USA pair from the John Newcombe School and then received a late call to go to Eastbourne for the under 16 singles at the nationals.

Carys Rees (Brookmans Park), Herts under 12 grass court singles champion, reached the finals of the under 12 girls doubles at the nationals. Carys, suffering from a bad shoulder, partnered by S. Beatley (Lincs), lost 6/1, 6/3 to Miss Humphrey-Davies (Cambridge) and Miss Oldham

(Surrey). Louise Jackson (St Albans) also completed at the nationals.

Laura Day, of Luton Road, Harpenden, and Janet Corrie, of Lyndhurst Drive, Harpenden, beat Alison Fitzgibbon and Ann Noakes 6/4, 4/6 (rtd.) to become regional winners of The Cannon Assurance Ladies Tennis Doubles Trophy.

Sean Wilkins has won through to the home counties north region semi-finals of the Advance Tennis Trophy. Sean is competing in the boys 18 and under event.

Nancey Brooke, of St Peters Lodge, Manor Road, St Albans, has won through to the semi-finals in the girls 16 and under and 14 and under.

Mandy Bishop, of Mount Pleasant Lane, Bricket Wood, won through to the semi-finals of the ladies open.

For some reason the regular Bridge afternoon was changed to coincide with the Yoga booking. They had to revert to their previous booking due to “problems of distraction for the Yoga people”. Should this have been the other way around ?

In 1986 Robert Graham understandably asked to stand down from his position as Secretary “at some stage soon” after 20 years on the Committee. He eventually succeeded in doing so in 1989 before becoming Chairman in 1995.

Despite falling membership (15% down between 1988 and 1989) the 90’s started with an LTA loan for floodlighting and carpet court improvements of £33,000 to be repaid over 10 years. This left an income each year of about £1,200. It was explained to the AGM that “while the committee are looking into the possibility of new and improved facilities, we must initially concentrate on paying off our debts.” The options were – increase membership numbers or the subscriptions. A couple of local tennis clubs folded in 1991 owing to financial difficulties during the recession.

Presumably due to the improved facilities the number of members began to increase. By 1991 the juniors and intermediates section was full (150 maximum allowed) and there was a waiting list. In 1991 the club was awarded “The Giro Bank Junior Club of the Year”. Junior club nights were well attended and trips were organised each year to Wimbledon and further afield.

By 1992 the size of the committee had become “overlarge and unwieldy” with 19 directors. A reorganisation took place delegating some of the posts to sub-committees. As a result Peggie Hitchcock dropped off the committee after a 52 year unbroken spell which is “certainly unique in the history of the club and possibly in the history of tennis”. She received an award from the LTA and was presented with a miniature replica of the Olympic Torch by the Duke of Kent at a ceremony in London. The Club presented her with “a framed valediction” as recognition of her work and she became a Vice President.





The 1992 AGM discussed whether to retain the playing in standard with some arguing that dropping it would mean increased membership, while others argued it would mean that the better players would leave. It was retained .... for a while.

1993 saw the club house being repainted externally and the “replacement of the window frames which were rotten.” The following year saw some new curtains in the clubhouse.

This year saw what was to be the last Junior Tournament run by Peggie Hitchcock. At the handicap finals day the Mayor, Sheila Burton, presented the cups.

There continued to be a high turnover of members and the committee were urged to “provide the facilities the members wanted and to create an ambience which encouraged them to stay.” The LTA Development Officer advised the committee that at the larger clubs they didn’t want to see more than four carpet courts, and encouraged cushioned acrylic. An exceptionally detailed analysis of “possible short, medium and long term club improvements” was drawn up by Tony Pritchard. As a result, the committee decided that carpet courts would provide most enjoyment to a majority of members.

The character of the club and attitudes were slowly changing around this time. The minutes included a prophetic statement : “With our current court mix and the lack of all year round play we haven’t the flexibility to cope well with the needs and expectations of today’s players. The worry is that we are not attracting as many new members as we should be and probably losing some. This situation can only be remedied by providing more all year round courts.” The majority decision at an Extraordinary General Meeting held in 1994 to dig up the three middle grass courts and replace them with three artificial grass courts was a “quantum leap forward”. Unfortunately the Club’s finances meant that the decision had to be put on hold in the short term.

Membership trends continued on a worrying downward trend especially due to the high turnover of members. “The main committee is finding it increasingly difficult to recruit volunteers and there are indications that the Club could be starting to run down.” In order to rectify this an informal brainstorming session was organised “looking for ways of improving our current practices and seeking new and possibly radical ideas which could make us sufficiently different from other clubs to attract new members and allow us to build for the future.” This meeting took place in July 1995 and turned out to be highly successful with 60 suggestions under the category “What we don’t have but want.” The more realistic yet, at the time, surprisingly radical ideas included :

1. More singles play and competitions
2. No playing in tests
3. Increased links with schools to utilise our courts during slack periods
4. Alternative ways of paying for the floodlights, possibly including in the annual subscription
5. Better communication with current and new members and the removal of ‘cliques’

In order to kick start the new era of development, fully floodlit artificial grass courts were laid over the middle grass courts in August 1995, partly paid for with a large VAT repayment and an LTA loan.



During the 90's various planning applications had been made relating to the building of houses on the surrounding grassland. Up until the new development began we were surrounded by fields with resident horses and donkeys who always appeared to show an interest in the entertainment being provided by the 'humons' ! A Public Inquiry in 1996 approved the building of 79 houses.

There were three break-ins in October 1996. Each time the bar and payphone were forced open with both stock and money being stolen. A silent alarm was successfully installed with the result that in November four men were arrested on site. Subsequently, three were found guilty, one of whom failed to convince the judge that he couldn't possibly be guilty because he was much too drunk at the time !

The Secretary reported that there had been a total of 13 break-ins since 1985 – with a loss of about £1,000 in cash and bar stock plus £2,500 worth of damage. i.e. £270 loss per year on average. This was considered an acceptable price to pay for allowing the club to remain an accessible arena to enjoy tennis

In 1997 the committee carried out a fundamental review "on what sort of club we wanted to be", either a family club or one to attract the top class players. It was decided that we wanted to remain as a family club and needed a coach who would be involved with the whole club rather than someone who just wanted to use the club as a base for their own coaching purposes. In September, Tony Wilkins, who had been a coach at the Club some years previously (1983 to 1988), was welcomed back as Head Coach.

A completely unprompted "Clean up our Club Day" was organised by two juniors who between them did just that – without attracting any volunteers to help them. This was very gratefully appreciated by the committee.

Interest in winter tennis had dropped off over the years with only two mens and 4 mixed leagues running. Despite the lack of winter play the club persisted in charging for the floodlights and the removal of this charge in 1997 was to lead to a much more vibrant and active club during the dark winter months. Over 50% of the adult membership are now participating in the winter mixed leagues.

Consideration was being given to introducing a second sport to the Club in order to maximise revenue although no great enthusiasm was found from the members at the AGM who felt "we just needed to increase membership numbers". Current funding levels meant that they were unable to replace the three original carpet courts that had shown signs of deterioration.

A small number of "enthusiastic members" had set up the WAGS (The Way Ahead Group). Their aim was to tackle the problems of poor facilities (playing and non-playing), low playing standards and the non-increasing membership. A well attended evening meeting was arranged by them in September 1998 to discuss with the members the Club's future strategy. A presentation was made by the Secretary of the Herts LTA and officers of two other local clubs, followed by group discussions led by facilitators. "We firmly believe that we must move forward as to stand still means we will fall behind other clubs".

Nearly all of the WAGS were elected on to the Committee in 1998 and their 'leader', Sheila Burton, immediately became the first woman Chairman of the Club.

1999 saw the "... and Croquet" being dropped from the Club's registered name, and the erection of a 15 metre high telecom mast. The latter was to provide a much needed input of funds to the club on a regular basis.

A survey of the membership showed 80% of those responding (more than 50% of households with adult members) in favour of converting the remaining grass courts to more carpet courts. Three of the old carpet courts were resurfaced, giving us six excellent carpet courts, three underused grass courts plus the four hard courts. An article in the Herts Advertiser (*'attached'*) shows youngsters using the new facilities.

A rolling plan of improvements was implemented with aims :

- a) For the club to become the top club in St Albans by providing the best standard of facilities
- b) To retain the current level of membership and increase it over the next three years with targets for specific age groups
- c) To develop a more open club which can be used by schools and other user groups
- d) To refurbish the clubhouse
- e) To offer a tennis programme for the disabled rather than just access.

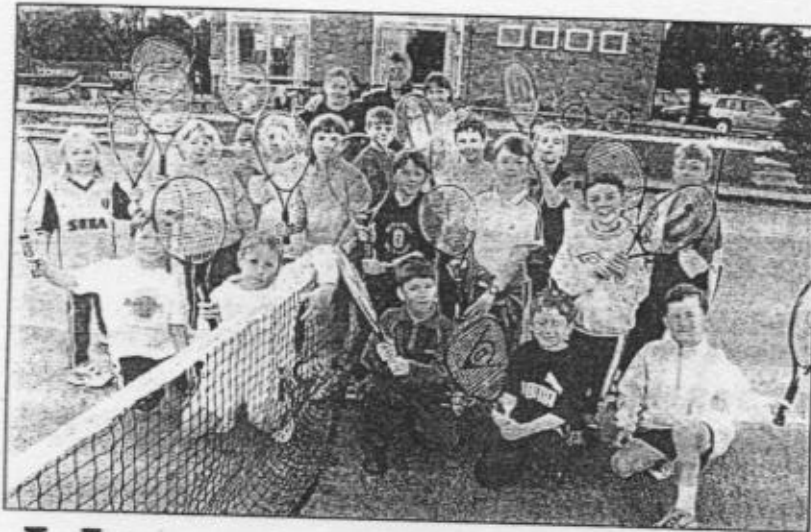
A charity breakfast was organised by Sheila Burton and Anne Swallow which was much appreciated by all those who partook. Other charity events were held including "Simon's Super Charity Quiz Night" which still continues on an annual basis raising money for local disabled youngsters.

The Millennium celebrations came and went with a lively privately run party with all profits going to local charity. Fireworks launched from the courts joined thousands of others lighting up the sky at midnight.

The new millennium began slowly at the Club with a new electronic keypad being installed together with a bike rack. However, "all loans to the Club have now been fully repaid and guarantors have been relieved of former covenants". Probably for the first time in the club's history we were self funding.

The committee agreed not to support a planning application by Orange to increase the height of their telecom mast which would have inevitably led to more satellite dishes. Partly as a result of our lack of support the application was eventually withdrawn.

(I)



# Youngsters court success

## Kids are first to try new facilities

**ANYONE** for tennis? The resounding answer from these children was yes please!

The occasion was a tournament held at St Albans Lawn Tennis Club (SALTC) recently to celebrate the renewed Astroturf courts.

A group of around 20 children from Wheatfields Primary School were invited along for the special visit which also included a chance to play table tennis in the clubhouse and raid the tuck shop.

SALTC press officer Maureen Adams said: "It was a splendid day and we were very lucky with the weather. The children were thrilled to bits to be among the first to play on the new surfaces."

Coach Tony Wilkins spent time working with the youngsters. Also helping were Jenni Gray and Wendy Conway, two of the club's top young players.





In 2000 the committee had discussed the fact that the patio had been built at different levels over the years, which was considered “unfriendly to wheelchairs, and somewhat dangerous to younger guests due to the lack of railings”.



Potential changes were considered to facilitate disabled access at the club including installing disabled toilets, wheelchair ramps from the patio and from the car park to the front door. Plans were drawn up and the new patio was opened in the Spring of 2002.



2003 was the end of an era at St Albans Tennis Club with the digging up of the last three grass courts. The importance of the event was recognised by the holding of a Wooden Racquet Tournament, with some gentleman players dressing up in long white trousers and boaters. Ironically, the winners were two youngsters who had never even held a wooden racquet in their life before that day !







**More pictures from the Wooden Racquet Tournament**



The grass disappeared towards the end of 2003 and a further three carpet courts took their place in early 2004, hopefully to be fully floodlit before the end of the year. The cost of well over £100,000 was many times the £1,580 paid for the whole ground at Hillside Road exactly 100 years before. The clubhouse windows were replaced and the kitchen re-painted. There are other improvements in the pipeline but there will always be room for more.

Mini tennis was becoming increasingly popular with youngsters and in 2004 Nancey Brooke was appointed 'Mini Tennis Co-ordinator'. The words 'mini tennis red, orange and green' entered our vocabulary.

This is where our history story ends for now. We should be proud of our past and the trials and tribulations which have got us to where we are today. We have a Club that will have nine excellent fully floodlit carpet courts and a new patio admired by both members and visitors. We have an increasing membership and money in the bank. Most of all we have a friendly club where everyone seems to enjoy their tennis. Not a bad way to end the first 100 years !



## Appendix

- Officers of the Club since 1904 *(as updated in 2009 edition)*
- Income in the Hillside Days
- Income since moving to Jersey Farm *(as updated in 2009 edition)*



**Chairmen (past and present) at the 2004 Handicapped Finals Day**

**(John Harris, Robert Graham, Sheila Burton and Simon Bird)**

## Officers of the Club

	<u>CHAIRMAN</u>	<u>SECRETARY</u>	<u>TREASURER</u>	
1904 /05	W.Carey Morgan			
1905 /06		R.Whitworth		
1906 /07				
1907 /08		F.Butler		
1908 /09		Noel Askwith		
1909 /10			C.M.Humble	
1910 /11				
1911 /12				
1912 /13	T.Cooper			
1913 /14				
1914 /15	Dr Eustace Lipscomb			
1915 /16				
1916 /17				
1917 /18				
1918 /19				
1919 /20				
1920 /21				
1921 /22				
1922 /23				
1923 /24				
1924 /25				
1925 /26				
1926 /27				
1927 /28	T.Cooper			
1928 /29				
1929 /30				
1930 /31			Mrs W.Saben	
1931 /32				
1932 /33				
1933 /34	T.Ottaway		T.Ottaway	
1934 /35				
1935 /36				
1936 /37				
1937 /38				
1938 /39		R.B.Ogden	P.Lower	
1939 /40				
1940 /41	R.B.Ogden		J.Dewing	
1941 /42				
1942 /43		I.Mark	Graham Murray	
1943 /44				
1944 /45				
1945 /46		Mrs M.J.Ogden		
1946 /47				
1947 /48		A.C.Carter	Eric Ascher	
1948 /49	G.Humble	P.C.R.Gimson		
1949 /50				
1950 /51		Michael Martin	Gerald Medley	
1951 /52				
1952 /53	A.C.Carter			
1953 /54		Ian Donald		
1954 /55				
1955 /56				
1956 /57	H.Wortley		John Gray	
1957 /58				
1958 /59	N.S.Clare	P.C.Bosdet		

## Officers of the Club

	CHAIRMAN	SECRETARY	TREASURER
1959 /80	Walter May	N.Healey	John Gray
1980 /81			
1981 /82			
1982 /83	Ivan Hopkins	Peggy Hitchcock	Michael Martin
1983 /84			
1984 /85			
1985 /86	Bill Paterson	Robert Graham	John Allen
1986 /87			
1987 /88			
1988 /89	Charles Allistone	Tony Pritchard	Mike Hobbs
1989 /90			
1990 /91			
1991 /92	John Harris	Simon Bird	Hugh Burrell
1992 /93			
1993 /94			
1994 /95	Robert Graham	John Allen	John Allen
1995 /96			
1996 /97			
1997 /98	Sheila Burton	Tom Quinn	Owen Mapley
1998 /99			
1999 /00			
2000 /01	Simon Bird	Simon Bird	Ian Pidgeon
2001 /02			
2002 /03			
2003 /04	Simon Bird	Simon Bird	Ian Pidgeon
2004 /05			
2005 /06			
2006 /07	Simon Bird	Simon Bird	Ian Pidgeon
2007 /08			
2008 /09			

