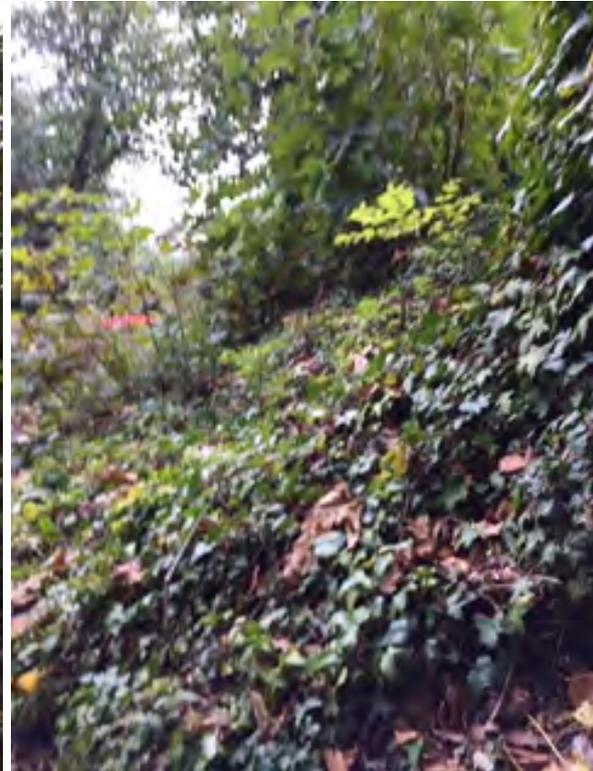


Mature vegetation at West Heath Lawn Tennis Club, providing wildlife foraging and habitat





Social use of West Heath Lawn Tennis Club



RECORD



SITE DETAILS

West Heath Lawn Tennis Club

Camden

Summary

West Heath Lawn Tennis Club is on the site of the former West Middlesex Waterworks covered reservoir, later owned by the Metropolitan Water Board, from whom the club leased the land. The Club opened in 1902 and had five grass courts, two of which were later converted to hard courts. Today the club continues to offer low-cost memberships and provide the opportunity for outdoors exercise for residents in the area and from elsewhere. It also provides a social meeting place, with club tournaments, suppers, picnics and other activities.

Basic Details

Site location: Croftway, off Ferncroft Avenue/Kiddipore Avenue, Hampstead
Postcode: NW3 7PQ

Fuller information

West Heath Lawn Tennis Club is located off an alley that links Ferncroft Avenue and Kidderpore Avenue, between which was a covered reservoir for the West Middlesex Waterworks. The company was established in Hammersmith in 1806 to supply water to west London and from 1903 became part of the publicly-owned Metropolitan Water Board, following the Metropolitan Water Act, 1902 (2 Edward VII, c.41). As the area was being developed for housing at the turn of the century, the site adjacent to the reservoir was unbuilt on due to the need to provide access for mains pipes from the reservoir. West Heath Lawn Tennis Club leased the site and opened here in 1902.

The earliest records of the Club date from 1912 when there were 85 playing members and five grass courts. The topic of hard courts, then known as rubble courts, arose as early as 1912 but it wasn't until 1937 that at an

Type of site: Other
Date(s): 1902
Designer(s):
Listed structures: None
Borough: Camden
Site ownership:
Site management: West Heath Lawn Tennis Club
Open to public? No
Opening times:
Special conditions:
Facilities:
Events:
Public transport: London Overground: Finchley Road and Frognal. Tube: Finchley Road (Jubilee, Metropolitan).



[Citymapper](#)

The information shown above was correct at the time of the last update 01/08/2017
 Please check with the site owner or manager for latest news.
www.westheathltc.co.uk

Further Information

Grid ref: TQ254859
Size in hectares:
Green Flag: No
On EH National Register : No
EH grade: None
Site on EH Heritage at Risk list: No

Extraordinary General Meeting it was voted to convert two of the grass courts to hard courts, paid for through an anonymous benefactor who was eventually repaid by 1948. Open to men and women, in the early days the latter were the most numerous - for example making up 62% of the membership in 1938 - although they played a subordinate role in running the club. Only in 1927 did the ladies' captain become ex officio committee member. From at least 1905 annual club tournaments were held, with men's and ladies' champions cups. The social side of the club was important with a club dinner recorded in 1913 on the last night of the season, although the outbreak of WWI put an end to the event in 1914. During the war activities were much reduced although the club remained open. A dance committee was elected in 1923 and a weekly club night was held from 1935, increasing to 2 nights a week soon after.

During WWII, the club became dormant, closing for five years, not re-opening until May 1946 when the club's finances were boosted by hiring the courts for use by students at the nearby educational institution Westfield College while its own courts were being restored following the war. The club's original pavilion, a single storey wooden building, was extended after 1948 and has remained little changed since then. In 2002 the club celebrated its Centenary with a Dinner and Dance, described by club member and historian Vince Sudbery: 'A grand and undoubtedly successful affair at the Highgate Golf Club; over a hundred and fifty members and ex members gathered in formal dress to celebrate the Club. They were entertained in a style not possible on the grass bank at the side of the reservoir, next to the wooden clubhouse, which is now the normal venue for members socialising.' In 2015 the tennis club ground was included as a

Registered common or village green on Commons Registration Act 1965: Np

Protected under London Squares Preservation Act 1931: No

non-designated heritage asset in Camden's Local List as a 'Natural Feature or Landscape'.

Sources consulted:

West Heath Lawn Tennis Club - Ludwig Berlin, Part 1 'The First Half-Century History' (May 2002),, Vince Sudbery, Part 2, 'Some Reflections from 1950 or so' (June 2009), Ken Percival, 'Postscript, Some Early Memories of West Heath' (November 2000)

Local Authority Data

The information below is taken from the relevant Local Authority's planning legislation, which was correct at the time of research but may have been amended in the interim. Please check with the Local Authority for latest planning information.

On Local List: Yes

In Conservation Area: Yes

Conservation Area name: Redington Froggnal

Tree Preservation Order: No

Nature Conservation Area: No

Green Belt: No

Metropolitan Open Land: No

Special Policy Area: No

Other LA designation: Open Space

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West Heath Lawn Tennis Club



Part I

The First Half-Century History

Ludwig Berlin, May 2002

Part II

Some Reflections from 1950 or So

Vince Sudbery, June 2009

vinrosa2000@yahoo.co.uk

Postscript

Early Memories of West Heath

Ken Percival, November 2000

***The First Half-Century of the
West Heath Lawn Tennis Club 1902 – 1952***

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Introduction

The minute book of the West Heath Lawn Tennis Club starts in 1912 and records that the 11th AGM took place on 7 November 1912, at St. Luke's Church, Kidderpore Avenue, Hampstead, to receive the treasurer's statement of account for 1 October 1911 to 30 September 1912.

Working back, one arrives at 1902 as the first playing summer of the club. The names engraved on the club champions' cups go back as far as 1905, when the Rev. W L Benthall won the men's and Mrs. J Salwey the ladies' singles.

The club's existence took some years to be officially acknowledged by the LTA, whose 1906 handbook contains a list of the addresses of Lawn Tennis club secretaries, including the following entry:-

WEST HEATH - G W Hart, Platt's End, Finchley Road.

This is the earliest official mention of the West Heath tennis club. If the club had been acknowledged when it was founded in 1902, it would have been one of 17 clubs then affiliated to the Middlesex County Lawn Tennis Association which today (April 2002) has 137 member clubs.

The club reaches its centenary this year, 2002. The following pages are based on the contents of the minute book of Committee, Annual General and Extraordinary General Meetings during the first half-century of its existence, up to 1952.

Ludwig Berlin

May 2002



1. Number of Club Members

The early club rules had imposed a ceiling on the number of playing members. In 1914 it was 90, later raised to 100. This maximum was presumably dictated by the need to conserve the surface of the then five grass courts. It must also be recalled that the intensity of court usage was much higher than it is now when many other interests compete for members' leisure time, not to speak of the simultaneous membership of several tennis clubs.

The earliest record is for 1912 when the club had 85 playing members. Membership seems to have stayed around this level until a decline set in after the Second World War. In 1946 it was as low as 60 and by 1951 it had only recovered to 68, causing the club treasurer to ascribe the £40 deficit to a lack of members. The ceiling on the number of members had, therefore, become absurd and was dropped in 1951.

It is satisfying to record that fifty years after its post-war low, the club's accounts for the eight months ended 31 December 2001 show 144 member subscriptions (excluding 30 juniors and 23 non-playing members).

2. Subscription Rates

Historical comparisons of subscription rates are bedevilled by the profusion of membership categories in the club's early years:

Annual 7-day
Summer 7-day, winter 5-day
Summer 7-day
Winter 7-day
Annual 5-day
Summer 5-day
Married (full)
Married (21-25)
Under 21
Under 17 5-day
Junior
School holiday
Non-playing
Honorary

It is a relief that this cumbersome structure has been simplified.

The earliest records of subscription rates go back to the years just after the First World War. The rates aroused great interest and detailed discussions among members. At the 1920 AGM four

narrowly different rates were each proposed, seconded and voted on. The rate finally adopted was £4 14s 6d (£4.72) which seems low until adjusted by the Retail Price Index into today's equivalent of about £127, and this for the summer season on grass courts only. This puts the 2002 membership fee of £160 into perspective.

3. Finances

The club's early finances were often described in gloomy terms by the treasurer. The records show, however, that they were always in reasonable order, showing mostly modest surpluses and the occasional small deficit. The largest deficit recorded in the period under review was in 1934 (expenditure £445, income £382, deficit £63).

The first annual income recorded is for 1912 when it was £312, which comes to £18,900 when converted into 2001 value. 83% came from subscriptions.

By comparison, the club's income for the year to 30 April 2001, which is the latest twelve-month period for which figures are available, was £24,330 of which 84% came from subscriptions.

At an extraordinary General Meeting in July 1937 it was resolved to construct two hard courts at a cost of £250, which equals about £9,875 today (2002) when inflated by the Retail Price Index. An anonymous benefactor provided the finance at 3% p.a., to be repaid over seven years. Repayment was completed in 1948 instead of 1944 as originally envisaged, but it is reasonably assumed that the closure of the club during much of the Second World War was taken into account. It was not until the year 2000 that the benefactor was openly identified as Mr C A E Percival who, over many years, was successively treasurer, chairman and president of the club. The identification was made by his son, Mr Ken Percival, in his delightful

Some Personal Jottings and Memories on Tennis and the WHLTC.

4. Formal Management Style

The minute books show that the early affairs of the club were conducted with a degree of formality. The committee insisted on receiving seven days notice of motions, as required under the club rules. New members had to be nominated and then formally elected by the committee which also had to approve the transfer from honorary to playing membership.

In 1937 it was decided that all those members who in future might be admitted to the club before they were personally known to three present members should be required to apply for re-election in the following year.

4.1 From Formality to Arrogance

Several entries convey an attitude of arrogance

A committee meeting was held on 5 July 1912 to discuss the honorary membership of Mrs S who had been proposed by three other ladies. The honorary secretary was instructed to write and say that the committee were not considering any further nominations as the club was very full. The very next entry in the minute book, however, reads as follows:

Mr & Mrs R..., Mr J... and Mrs C... were elected honorary members

In 1916, in the middle of the First World War, a request was received from the Lymington Lawn Tennis Club (a few hundred yards down the Finchley Road) requesting West Heath to admit six or more Lymington members for the season at a reduced fee, as their ground had been taken over by the War Office. West Heath

regretted that we were unable to accede to same.

On 11 February 1921

Miss T.'s application for temporary membership was blackballed and therefore not accepted.

A particularly pretentious entry on 5 September 1946 (when membership had fallen to its all-time low) reads as follows:

The committee resolved that in future applicants for the WHLTC should be interviewed by two members of the committee, one of whom should be the Hon Treasurer or Hon Secretary. The applicants should be informed that their case would be considered and in the event of the applicants being desirable, forms should be sent to their proposers without further reference to the committee. In the event of there being any doubt the committee should be consulted before any further steps be taken.

5. Women Members

In 1938, the first year for which such a breakdown is available, ladies (as they were then called) constituted 62% of West Heath

membership. By contrast, in the latest club membership list, which shows the situation as at 13 September 2001, the proportion of women is only 35%.

In spite of their early numerical predominance, women played only a subordinate role in the running of the club. The men's captain had been a committee member as far back as 1912. It was not until 1927 that the ladies' captain became ex officio a committee member.

In 1923 the AGM elected a dance committee consisting of three men

with the power to select any further lady members to the committee

The high proportion of women among the membership caused concern to the committee. An entry in 1916 says that there were no more vacancies for lady members and as late as 1948 the committee agreed

when the total membership reaches 90, to possibly consider limiting [presumably new] membership to men only.

The committee need not have worried. Social developments, such as the growing proportion of modern women with paid jobs, solved the problem for them.

6. The Courts

The West Heath Lawn Tennis Club, Hampstead originally had, as the name implies, only grass courts. The topic of hard courts (then called rubble courts) is first mentioned in 1912, when the AGM

instructed the committee to make enquiries if it be possible to get any further ground for additional rubble courts.

Nothing came of this matter, which was raised again in 1928, but this time in the form of a suggested conversion of the existing grass courts into hard courts.

The proposal was then postponed owing to the decreasing period of the lease. In March 1937 this was renewed and at an EGM in July 1937 it was resolved to convert courts 4 and 5 from grass to red hard courts. Permission was obtained from the landlords (the Metropolitan Water Board) and the contract awarded to the en tout cas company. At the AGM in November 1937 it was reported that the courts were nearing completion so that 1938 would be their first year in operation.

The total number of courts has remained constant at five.

Present members who find it difficult to cope with the lack of space behind the base lines of court 1 might be interested in the following July 1937 entry:

Miss M R... suggested that court No 1 should be lengthened and it was reported that the committee already had this under consideration.

6.1 Sharing the Courts

The West Heath Lawn Tennis Club has, since 1946, allowed various nearby colleges to hire its hard courts for use by their students.

The first to do so was Westfield College whose own courts were unusable after the war. The arrangement lasted only a year. By then Westfield had put its own courts in order and West Heath lost the income.

Needing the money, the club secretary canvassed nearby girls' schools and in May 1947 agreed to lease the hard courts to St Margarets on Monday and Wednesday afternoons during the summer season.

7. The Pavilion

In October 1914 it was decided that nothing should be done with regard to the new pavilion owing to the war. Evidently the pavilion had been unsatisfactory. It was to remain so for many years. In 1937 it was described as unsuitable for winter play and its periods of sitting out. The committee then decided that the west end of the pavilion might be glazed or boarded up, adding that this was not to be a permanent fixture.

However, at the 1948 AGM the chairman said that the club proposed to extend the premises by building an addition to the clubroom. The structure of the pavilion has been unchanged ever since.

The interior has, however, been improved, partly through members' efforts. At the 1952 AGM Miss Daphne Money and Miss Anne Caldwell were thanked for having made the curtains for the clubhouse.

8. The Bar

At the 1932 AGM a member pointed out that whereas the sale of drinks should show a profit, this item actually figured as a loss. The Hon. Treasurer replied that the deficit was due to the fact that members had, at times, and chiefly on Sundays, fallen into the regrettable habit of helping themselves and not marking up their purchases. The meeting then asked the committee to use their best endeavours to see that this was put to an end. Plus ça change!

There is a puzzling entry in 1938 when it was decided

that measures be obtained of the type that fix into the neck of the bottles and give a visible indication of the quantity.

Does this mean that the bar at the West Heath Club used to sell spirits?

9. The Telephone

In 1912 the club secretary wrote to the telephone company to enquire the cost of installing a telephone on the basis of half a year's subscription. The telephone company, hardly unreasonably, refused to entertain the matter. The committee then decided to let the matter drop.

The minutes do not make it clear when a telephone was installed but it first appears as an item of expenditure in the club's accounts for 1925.

In 1951 the club treasurer asked members not to forget to pay for the telephone. Again plus ça change.

10. Security

An astonishing entry in the minute book records a committee decision in 1948:

Agree to put broken glass on the wall at the Croftway end of the club and to lock the club at night, putting the keys in a hiding place.

Surely this can be interpreted in no other way than that up to 1948 the club was left unlocked day and night and that West Heath members felt the club was safe?

11. Club Nights

It was only in 1934 - more than 30 years after the club's foundation – that a weekly club night was first proposed. It started in 1935, on Wednesdays. This was shortly afterwards increased to two nights, viz. Tuesdays and Thursdays.

12. The Club Tournament

The annual club tournament goes back at least as far as 1905, the year when the men's and ladies' champions cups were introduced.

The date of the tournament was frequently changed. In different years, it started in May, June, July, late August or September.

The length of the tournament was equally variable. It was, at different times, one week with two weekends, two weeks, three weeks and even four weeks.

13. Matches Against Other Clubs

The playing of matches was first proposed at the 1921 AGM. Nothing seems to have come of this because at the 1925 AGM it was proposed to play 'A' men's matches. This was left in the hands of the captain. This is a puzzling entry. Does it mean that the men's first team had not, up to then, been playing matches against other clubs? In that case what was the role of the captain?

14. Saturday Afternoon Teas

These teas were important occasions for West Heath members. In the early days of the club, lady members vied with each other to provide good teas. They continued to do so well into the First World War until in 1916 they had to be reprimanded by the chairman

that the tea committee should endeavour to persuade the hostesses to provide plain teas only and not to deviate from the unanimous wishes of the committee.

The problem became academic in 1917 when all teas were cancelled owing to rationing.

In the inter-war years differences arose between those who wanted to continue to have their free Saturday afternoon teas and those, headed by the treasurer, who insisted on a charge of sixpence. The matter was discussed and voted on at the 1934 and 1935 AGMs. The outcome of this confrontation cannot now be established, but

the severe tone of the treasurer's report to the 1936 AGM leaves little doubt that his insistence on economies prevailed.

15. The Club Dance

In 1913 the club held a dinner on the last night of the season. The first time a dance is mentioned is in the minutes of 8 July 1914 when a sub-committee was appointed "to take what steps they consider desirable" and put a notice on the board to see what support a dance would attract.

Three weeks later the First World War broke out and at the next committee meeting it was resolved to hold no dance, owing to the war.

Support for a dance took a long time to recover. In at least one year in the 1920's there was no dance

owing to insufficient numbers wishing for one.

Support grew in the 1930's and in 1938 at least 118 tickets were sold.

16. The Importance of the Club to its Members

There are indications that in its early years the club played a bigger part in the lives of its members than it does today.

Annual General Meetings were routinely attended by close to half the membership. This compares favourably with the turnout in recent years when barely one member in six would be present. At the 1926 AGM, after the ladies captaincy had fallen vacant,

Mrs Duncum, Mrs Arthur, Miss Flegg, Miss Moreland and Miss Bore were nominated as ladies captain. Mrs Arthur was duly elected.

It is difficult to imagine that nowadays, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, five women would engage in so intensive a competition for the honour.

17. Reception of New Members

The club could be self-critical. At a 1939 committee meeting it was said that members had possibly been lost by delayed replies to applications. The secretary apologised and offered his resignation (which does not seem to have been accepted).

At the same meeting the president suggested that there had been misgivings about the reception of new members and their obtaining games. He recommended that at least one member of the committee should be in attendance every club night.

18. Publicity

Members are frequently exhorted to persuade their friends to join the club.

As far back as the 1930's members suggest circularising the club's neighbourhood for new members.

The need for a board to show the whereabouts of the club is mentioned from time to time as shown by these extracts from two committee meetings:

17 February 1938

The secretary was instructed to approach the Council with regard to the possibility of placing notice-boards giving the position of the club at each end of Croftway.

29 March 1938

Permission had been obtained from the Council to erect suitable direction posts to the club at each end of Croftway.

The club did not, however, make use of this permission and no boards were put up. 64 years later, in the year 2002, when this earlier application had long been forgotten, the club again applied to the council and permission was granted once more. This time, however, the club did erect attractive boards.

19. The First World War

The first half-century of the West Heath Lawn Tennis Club, which is the subject of this report, coincided with a difficult period in the life of the country. It encompassed the two World Wars and the Great Depression of the interwar years.

Though the club did not close during the First World War, its activities were greatly restricted. Annual subscriptions for civilians were halved. Club members, serving with the colours had their subscriptions totally remitted while remaining playing members.

Incredibly, lady members who were away nursing had their subscriptions remitted provided they did not play and if they returned they would be admitted as temporary members at a fee of £1.1.0 per month.

No tournaments or dances were held during the war and no Annual General Meetings took place in the years 1916 - 1918.

20. The Great Depression

The difficult economic conditions between the wars are reflected in the minutes of the club. At the 1931 AGM the chairman proposed, and the meeting accepted, that in view of the stringency of the times and the falling off in membership, the paying of the entrance fee might be spread over three years. At the 1935 and 1936 AGMs the entrance fee was actually suspended.

21. The Second World War

The Second World War had a severe impact on the club. At the (barely attended) AGM in May 1941 the club was described as dormant, with members remaining members without subscription.

At a committee meeting in August 1945 it was resolved that all old members should be written to in order to find out if there were sufficient members to restart the club. In May 1946 the West Heath Lawn Tennis Club opened its doors again. They had been closed for five years.

Great credit for the re-opening of the club must go to Miss Gedge of nearby Westfield College (presumably the headmistress) who wanted the courts for her girl students to play on and pressed the West Heath functionaries to ask the Metropolitan Water Board for a renewal of the lease.

22. Post-war austerity

The end of the war did not mean the end of difficulties. Years of shortages lay ahead. Tennis balls were scarce and the groundsman did not have enough petrol for his motorbike. A lady member, Miss Henderson, volunteered to assume the duties of food officer for the club, including the buying of rationed goods for the club's teas and the tedious handling of Food Office returns.

It was not until the mid-fifties that austerity gradually gave way to the prosperity which has, with setbacks, lasted ever since.

This concludes the history of the first half-century of the club. It will be left to another historian to document the second half-century.

Ludwig Berlin
1 May 2002

End of Part 1

West Heath Lawn Tennis Club



Part I, The First Half Century History

***by Ludwig Berlin
2002***

Part II Some Reflections from 1950 or So

***by Vince Sudbery
2009***

vinrosa2000@yahoo.co.uk

Some Reflections from 1950 or So

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Introduction

I have been a member of this club for some 39 years now and am pleased to have the opportunity to contribute a companion piece to my good friend Ludwig Berlin's* 'The First Half Century of West Heath Lawn Tennis Club 1902 to 1952'. I would like to acknowledge the help of the current Chair Moira Duncan who has made available the Clubs' archive for much of the period and generally progressed this document.

A number of members have shared their memories particularly of the early years of this period and I would like to thank:

Ludwig Berlin, Jane Boyle, Barbara Donovan, Sultan Gangji, Pauline Hughes, Celia** and Allan Malcolm, Jean Pateman, Paul Rubie, Kevin Ryan, Bill Thom and Connie Welsman as well as my wife, Rosie Phelps for these contributions. Rosie, as well as Mike and Carol Clark, have also read the initial proof and offered corrections and suggestions.

Miriam Halahmy and the Wednesday Writing Classes at The Highgate Literary and Scientific Institute offered constructive criticism on parts of the first draft.

To give the work some shape I take the following areas in turn:

Grounds and premises
Competitive Play
Social and Social Play
Committee and Management

Important changes took place on the grounds in 1937 and I have digressed outside of the period proper to discuss these. I try to describe both what has changed as well as what has remained the same.

All the accounts are indeed highly selective, based on a personal perspective of an average player, and the information readily available. For this reason I have titled this section 'Reflections' rather than 'History'.

I have examined the minutes for the period 1912 to 1985, members have shared their memories from the period of about 1955; I joined the Club in the spring of 1970. A fuller list of sources follows the narrative.

I hope this record, while neither comprehensive nor balanced, is more or less accurate, objective to an extent, and entertains a little.

Vince Sudbery

June 09

*Ludwig celebrates 50 years membership this year
** Celia joined before Ludwig and is still playing

1. Grounds

The Club is tucked away off the alley, Croftway which links Ferncroft and Kidderpore Avenues, a little to the North and West of Hampstead village. It owes its existence to a covered reservoir between these two avenues and Platts Lane. The egress mains pipes would have prevented perhaps ten or twelve additional houses being built (on the site of the Club) as access by the then Metropolitan Water Board was needed. The area was newly built, with large red brick houses, at the turn of the previous Century. Anyone entering the premises in 1950, as I did in 1970, would have climbed the path, through the green door from Croftway, past two raised red shale hard courts previously known as rubble, and a little further past three grass courts facing west into the setting sun. Beyond these stood and stands, erect enough, a single story wooden building, now and probably then painted green, and likely then as now flaking a little. The thick paint has an even bigger function today in holding the building which provides, clubroom, bar and changing rooms, together. The roof may well be of a banned substance, reflecting the raffish aspect the Club sometimes has.

So not much has changed: twelve or so years earlier, though, when Fred Perry, in long trousers was winning the last of his three Wimbledon titles the club had voted for a major change; finance was available to change the bottom two courts, from rather poorly prepared grass, to all weather rubble needing less maintenance and generally available for play in winter. The advantages of the change were hotly contested and the use of two surfaces in what then as now is a grass court club was deprecated. Most members of the period (in total over a thousand) would, I think, agree that the case for change and compromise was strong and has benefited the Club, these last seventy or so years.

In 1937 though, as in 1952, the member who belonged to another club as well would, I think, have been unusual, probably exceptional. It is normal now, so the case for the change to two surfaces, with greater flexibility would be more difficult to make today.

During the Second World War the club fell into disuse and the grounds untended returned to a state the poet Gerald Manley Hopkins, who had lived, about seventy years previously, just up the road on Oakhill Way would have approved.

*Let them be left
Oh let them be left
Wildness and wet
For what would the world be
Once bereft of wet and of wilderness?*

The grass grew perhaps to waist or even shoulder height and the wild flowers probably returned; the Club may have reverted to meadow.

By the early fifties though a Groundsman Pat McMullen had been employed and the managing Committee busied itself, in those austere times, obtaining a supplementary allowance of petrol for his motorbike. In 1954 his hours had been restored to forty eight which seems a lot to mow, mark and perhaps water three grass courts twice a week and sweep and roll and water two hard courts a similar number of times. The Groundsman then though would probably have been the single paid employee and his duties included tending the bar, maintaining the flowerbeds on the path, and no doubt looking after the clubhouse. Before mains sewers were piped in the 'Elsans' would also, no doubt, have needed attention.

The various entries in the minute books record the relationship with the Groundsman mainly on the occasions it was not working well.

The Honorary Secretary agreed to speak with Brown and advise him that a little more use of the heavy roller would be advantageous' (circa 1920))

The highly mathematical exercise of marking the courts should not be left to the Groundsman' (1960)

The Groundsman should be restored to 48 hrs and £7 a week. (1954)

If an odd job man is to be employed a way must be found of securing the liquor (1956)

It was some time since he had given a full day's work for his pay; his resignation is not to be regretted. (On the resignation of Pat in 1957)

And when the Groundsman was thought to feel ignored and be dispirited

There were several lady members who would be willing to come up from time to time and make encouraging remarks and pass on instructions. (1962)

This last extract may have been a little tongue in cheek, embedded as a time capsule by the then secretary the late John Pateman, a classical scholar. These extracts, with one earlier exception, all come from the fifties and the sixties. Later, the late Richard Rogers a conscientious and practical member took on the role of

Groundsman. Later again from about 1980 for a period of about twenty five years, the late Pepe Vilarelle, was appointed freelance grounds contractor - a position additional to his main employment at the nearby and rather smarter Cumberland Club. Pepe was an expert Groundsman, and as such probably knew which corners could be cut. In any event successive chairmen (the late Edward Barnes, the late Wilfred Clarke Jones, preferred to accept Pepe on his own terms, including hard headed negotiation, with the possibility of resignation, rather than face the uncertainty that an unreliable grounds person would have presented.

I first met Pepe, I think in 1979, when Gillian Brown, the Secretary and I were tasked with producing a report on the grounds, which was to cover the ideal maintenance required for the current courts, and the possibility of changing the playing surfaces to something producing truer bounces and requiring less maintenance. I remember meeting him at the grounds, which he admired, before giving commendably succinct directions, on what was needed to bring both sets of courts into good condition, and kept so.

The report is no longer to hand but the maintenance schedule would have been along the lines:

Hard 'En Tout Cas' Courts

To restore: Dig in top dressing, Level clinker base, Lay one and a half tons of mixed dressing per court, water roll and nail in new tapes.

To maintain

Roll at least once a week, keep surface moist, sweep after play.

Do not play after frost. Do not sweep puddles from courts.

Grass Courts.

To restore

Vigorously scarify with special rake at end of season to remove dead roots.

Tine with hollow spikes to introduce air to roots

Level courts with one ton top dressing per court.

Re seed baselines and court with special lawn tennis seed

Water as necessary

As a result of this (Brown/Sudbery report) I recall hiring a five ton high sided vehicle from Coleman's in Crouch End and taking, in high winds the M1 North to Leicester, where En Tout Cas had their premises – a factory on the City outskirts of distinctly Heath Robinson aspects whereby red bricks were loaded on to a conveyor belt, raised to a height of fifty feet or so, dropped, ground by large rollers to various consistencies and packed into 1cwt polythene bags ready for dressing the levelled courts. The premises had a slightly gloomy industrial air like a defunct Dante's inferno swathed in red cloud. Peter Krasucki, riding sidesaddle as Edward Barnes put it, opted to take the wheel for the return trip, hoping for a smoother ride. The hired vehicle during the return to its native Crouch End maintained its stygian shake and Peter soon relinquished the wheel.

Pepe, was initially employed as consultant on grounds maintenance generally. He replaced the contractor Trimlawns, whose maintenance was not providing courts satisfactory to the members, and renovated the hard courts. He looked after the courts until his sudden and untimely death in 2004. By this time, En Tout Cas had ceased trading, Britain had stopped manufacturing even basic necessities like ground brick dust, and Sultan Gangji had to source the commodity from the Southern part of the European Community.

On occasion the members assisted with maintenance or renewal of the courts or surrounds in a traditional West Heath Working Party. This would be welcomed by a Groundsman normally working while members played and whose work would be noticed more by its absence than routine presence. I recall a working party, which Pepe lead in the early eighties to replace the stop netting around the grass courts. I have a memory of my friend John Knight burrowing with a trowel to dig a hole of a couple of feet into which concrete would be poured and the eight-foot pole set. As the sun from over Westfield shone on to the glistening, almost luminous courts after a shower, the image of a stockbroker digging at the end of a rainbow survives.

At the end of this period the club invested in an all singing all dancing watering system, centred around a thousand gallon water tank, more or less adjacent to the replaced wall; it had two powerful pumps. This was constructed by Pepe (assisted by a plumber mate) working at the limits of his design capacity. It featured a labyrinthine collection of electrical and plumbing connections electromagnetic and mechanical, which on a good day, and with the Groundsman present would satisfactorily irrigate either the two hard or three grass courts in the space of perhaps an hour. This same operation with old-fashioned circular gravity sprinklers, would take three hours, though their pace was perhaps more suited to the general ambience of West Heath.

Pepe was though the Deus ex Machina for this system; without his presence it would not function. Periodically during the early years of this century, engineers like my good friend the late Don Wood or plumbers sporting Aquarius tee shirts could be seen moonlighting mixing with the tennis players tending the beast. It would tease them by sporadically and briefly, irrigating one or other part of the courts creating a fertile oasis puddle with barren surrounds. In reality though it (the system) was dead and these, the last throes towards rigor mortis. Even in the full vigour of its short life, the drops of water from its high sprinklers bombed the shale courts creating mini craters.

It fell to Sultan Gangji, now an expert commissioner, to order a professional system in 2008, of which we have high expectations, of giving lasting service.

Maintenance of the courts during the hundred odd years of the Club's existence can reasonably be summarised from the minutes of a meeting held on Feb 17 1938 at 6 Honeybourne Grove NW6 – the house of Mr C.A.E Percival and one of the few members with management longevity to match or exceed Sultan's. (See Chapter 4)

Considerable discussion took place on the subject of the Groundsman and it was decided that Mr Clarke be asked to make enquiries of a possible likely applicant and that, provided a favourable answer was received, he, Mr Percival, and the Hon Secretary are empowered to discharge Wren and engage a new Groundsman at a wage not exceeding £2-15-0.

Messrs Clark, Percival and Peacock were appointed to a greens committee to have sole right of instructing the Groundsman in his duties, such greens committee to be fully cooperative and open to suggestion from the main body.

2. Premises

At the start of this period the Clubhouse was heated and lit by gas and for twenty-five or so years the club had boasted a telephone. A flurry of activity in the late fifties saw the installation first of mains sanitation through the good offices of the German YMCA then at 22 Ferncroft Avenue, in a long negotiation involving the Prudential (the landlords of the YMCA) and the then Metropolitan Water Board as well as the late Frank Slingsby for the Club. A little later, mains electricity was wired in, assisted by the engineer and member Allan Malcolm. In return for the sanitation pipes permission, the MWB clawed land back on Croftway to build the electrical substation, which remains a feature of Croftway. 'Danger of Death' on entering this, the now LEB notice threatens. The Club, on the other hand, has consistently and generally successfully sought a friendly face to prospective members, and a laminated notice invites people to 'play on grass' and shows some of our better players disporting themselves competitively in partially coloured sportswear on the courts.

In the first couple of decades, the club sported bare and rather attractive boards in the clubhouse, at some stage a director of Cable and Wireless who lived nearby in Romney's House, on Holly Mount donated his redundant carpets. Rather before that, smart patterned china had been gifted to the club, by a donor who wished to remain anonymous. Certainly by the eighties, the club was commodious enough, and a discerning if bohemian member and his pet animal moved in, following the theft of the mobile home in which he was living. His gents' clothes neatly hung to dry on the gas service pipes on the path, his pet animal War Horse happily dining from the anonymous member's gifted china. Were the animal to be larger and the club smaller one could imagine it (the club) being towed away replacing the mobile home that had been stolen.

There remains a pride in making the inside of the creaky clubhouse attractive. Jane Boyle and Moira Duncan appear to lead on different aspects of this. The ubiquitous and highly practical Myles Walshe maintains it.

Outside of the Clubhouse, on the bank above the grass courts, Paul Segalini for some years in charge of the bar built in the late eighties a fine brick barbecue, of considerably more robust construction than the Clubhouse.

3. Social and Social Play

When Celia Malcolm joined the Club in the early fifties she was impressed by the number of (medical) doctors who played there. This is not surprising perhaps for a Club, in a pleasantly situated position, near the then medical establishments, of Hampstead General Hospital, Mount Vernon hospital, New End Hospital, and various GP Practices. In fact the grandfather of the man that she married (Alan Malcolm) founded Hampstead General. The Royal Free which replaced it, transferred from Grays Inn Road, and until recently included a Malcolm ward, named after Alan's grandfather.

In the fifties and sixties the Club has been described to me as family oriented. Connie Welsman kindly followed up our discussion on Club history with this note:

A family affair

Jo and Ken Kemp joined the Club in 1956 and introduced Jo's two sisters – Connie Welsman and Barbara Donovan in 1957.

Later Ken Kemp took charge of the Bar. Ernest Welsman became treasurer for approx 6 years, and Richard Rogers (then Barbara's husband) looked after the grounds for a short time.

The above three sisters and their husbands were members for a long period. The last to leave was Connie Welsman at the age 80 in 2003.

Some of the relationships within the club have aspects of an extended family in the way that paths cross, and cross again, over time. I remember that Connie 'played me in' in 1970, I took over running the bar from Richard in about 1976, Barbara Donovan, Billy Mai and I played regularly together in the eighties.

Sultan writes that mention could be made of romances that flourished at West Heath:

John Knight marrying Mo Blenkins, Alan Rogers with Gabriella, Wilfrid Clarke –Jones with Rosemary, Vince reuniting with Rosy, Sultan marrying Rachael (although they met at nearby Westfield the relationship flourished at WH)

Successive generations of children have come to the Club and generally I think enjoyed it. Donald Iles, Chairman, attended with his son. Wilfrid and Rosemary Clarke Jones's daughters Joanna and Lorna were regular at tenders in the eighties, as was Emma Rogers. Stephanie Stapleton played in the nineties Carine and Margot Valarche and Daniel Stapleton are sometimes there nowadays.

The 1985 Middlesex Official Handbook profiles West Heath as one of the pioneer clubs of Middlesex. (Included are clubs such as Highgate, Finchley Manor and Queens.) The late John Pateman who wrote the article comments on the membership, which is cosmopolitan and interesting, its Groundsman first class, and the professionalism surrounding finals day. He refers to the lack of security of tenure as it is situated above a reservoir *and a DIY attitude (that) extended to almost every other part of the Club's life, engendering (in) its members a strong corporate spirit – and a cheerful fatalism.*

He refers, by name to a couple of leading players of the middle part of this period namely Keith Sinclair who captained an Olympic Hockey 11 and Frank Laszlo an Hungarian Junior Champion and goes on to write of the Club tradition of:

Next four on court

No rigging of a four

Rabbits in consequence found themselves playing in the same four as the Club's champion: and many ceased as a result to be rabbits.

Club times then were Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday and Sunday afternoons and I recall during the seventies whiling away many a pleasant weekend afternoon or evening in the stunningly attractive setting of the Club 'perched above the pipes of The Thames Water Authority' playing moderate tennis or sipping a glass of the draft Whitbread bitter looking out over the lawns, red shale and ancient trees, all above the residential gardens of the clubs neighbours. (Phil Hardy it was who described it as *the only pub in London where you can play tennis*)

The peer pressure John describes, to ensure people play in rotation, suggests that the rules though clear enough, were not universally observed even when he wrote in the middle eighties. The system in theory had a random aspect to it. The four waiting longest would take the next court to be vacated. There would then be a spin of rackets to select partners based on the piping spacing the strings being finished up (rough) or down (smooth). Other factors of relevance are gender match and playing strength. The system could be described in more detail but not entertainingly so by this writer. Some players would appear to get a desirable result in terms of a good partner in a good four more frequently than probability unaided would provide. One very senior civil servant, albeit in a slightly different aspect of play, has been described to me *as always giving himself the benefit of the doubt even when there was none.* Professor Joad of the Brains Trust of that time, who apparently played to win at any cost, and who lived at the nearby

Pryors on the side of the Heath, is thought to have been excluded from the Club. If so it could be taken as indication of the extent to which sportsmanship was valued.

Members now as then gather at Club times, the Thursday session, though, removed for lack of support. (Many members work longer hours and there is more choice of leisure activity. Paul Rubie, current Secretary has commented in a little detail on the sociological changes affecting the Club particularly longer working hours and more choice in leisure activities.) The rules for order of play frequently ignored in the seventies and eighties still exist, but are less carefully observed. Any member arriving during the season on weekend afternoon will though still be assured of plenty of play in the attractive surroundings. The standard of play is probably on average higher.

Different members will regard different periods as golden. The main outside social event in the first two decades of this period was the annual dance. This was held in place such as Westfield College or Pauline Hughes advises, above the 'Gatehouse' in Highgate. Quite difficult to arrange with bar, band, and catering and commented on in the Minutes in various terms of approbation and otherwise. This minute from October 1961 gives an insight into the difficulties:

Arising from the Minute

A. Annual Dance

Various aspects of the Annual Dance were noted

1 Generally speaking the event had been a success

2 A sum of approximately £15 was missing from the till at the end of the evening....

3 Once again the tombola had been a great success

4 The band had not performed well....

5 The service of the catering woman had been unsatisfactory

And so on; one has to wonder how bad it would have had to have been to merit a less than successful rating. By the mid late sixties the dances gave way to other activities

In 1972 Rosemary Phelps as Social Secretary, in fur lion tamer mini-skirt, was arranging events such as a disco on a barge and down the Thames, and parties at her flat in Harley St. She sought to get members away from the club to socialise, and no doubt organised events carefully and with flair. One party was though the day before finals. Unusually your historian was scheduled to appear, with partner Pete Skehan (the competition then, was played over a longer period, and was less contested). Their slim chances were reduced by the partying but happily enough (in terms of result), for the outsiders, one of the opposition was indisposed, and the event that year blanked on the men's doubles cup.

Rosemary and Wilfrid Clarke Jones organised barbecues to which, for ease of catering, members 'brought their own meat' and the club room on a club evening would resemble a Hampstead bar. (The padded pink plastic on the front of the bar, installed circa 1984 in fact appears to be modelled on that of the King of Bohemia, then on the High Street.)

From 1975, I think, Sultan Gangji organised the tournament now over a reduced period, with plenty of opportunities for socialising, culminating in a barbecue frequently with more than sixty people, with revellers present, until the small hours.

Jane Boyle identifies a change from a family and couples oriented club in the sixties to more diverse social activities in the Club from the eighties when, for instance Max Lickfold and Janet O'Connor organised skiing holidays. Kevin Ryan also remembers the Club in the mid eighties when he returned to London as a centre for social activities...

All you needed for a weekend, and the centre of the weekend, arranged tennis at lunchtime, followed by some beers and mixing in with social tennis, and then out for a meal.

The Dinner and Dance organised by Moira Duncan, Sultan Gangji and Julia Abbott in 2002 for the Centenary was a one off – a grand and undoubtedly successful affair at the Highgate Golf Club; over a hundred and fifty members and ex members gathered in formal dress to celebrate the Club. They were entertained in a style not possible on the grass bank at the side of the reservoir, next to the wooden clubhouse, which is now the normal venue for members socialising. The letters Moira received in response to the event confirming the affection in which the Club is held and how previous members keep in touch though separated in time and distance from when they met. John Walker who lives in Sydney, was over for the anniversary, June Burrell, who met her husband Joe at the Club, in the forties and who now lives at Henley on Thames was unable to attend. Robert Wendt whose parents John and Alisa (nee Mitchell) met at the Club write to Ann Bassett by email 30 May 2000)

I think it speaks volumes for the atmosphere at that period that six West Heath members are still good friends after fifty plus years, and you can see why it has particularly special memories for my parents

I conclude this section by noting that on the demolition of the old Hampstead General Hospital, (the hospital founded by Mr Malcolm Senior in the nineteenth Century) in about 1978 an enterprising member retrieved some cutlery for the Club, otherwise to be buried by the ball and chain demolition, and a careful inspection of the

cutlery drawer will probably still reveal the logo 'NHS 1948' on some items.

The Club currently has three medical doctors: Dr Elena Valarche; Dr Jeff Fine; Mr Paul O'Flynn. They cover a wide variety of medical specialities and all are competitive tennis players.

4. Competitive Play

One link between social play and competitive play is the coach. In the mid seventies, and early eighties, Terry Turner coached members generally and particularly the Men's second team. In the early nineties Tim Harpur fulfilled the role, also teaching his specialty of Tai Chai applied to lawn tennis. The martial aspect of the latter perhaps appropriate to the competitiveness of some members. During the noughties, Oram Hecht and Michael Forsys each a previous player in the men's circuit top 500 improved our play.

The 2007 Newsletter describes the

two weeks starting at the end of the week following Wimbledon as the highlight of the Club Calendar.

Most members who consider themselves still competitive will enter at least one of the singles, mixed; men's or ladies doubles and the strongest will pull through to Finals Day probably the third or fourth Saturday in July. For at least the last five years the matches have been reported on the Club's web site by webmaster Peter Davies, a shrewd observer and astringent commentator on the tennis and gossip stemming from the events. The event is managed by Men's Club Captain Sultan Gangji in conjunction with the Ladies Captain, currently Ros Norkett. It is recognised as Sultan's event, a professional referee, he has been running it since 1975, orchestrating and developing the social events that accompany it.

For this period the Club becomes a hive of activity with its facilities stretched by the numbers of players and spectators and the attendant wining and dining facilities they have come to expect. There has been an event or events of this kind for the whole of the period considered here, the second half of the twentieth century. The quality of the tennis has been maintained or improved somewhat; the interest has consistently increased. Where the visitor at Wimbledon needs to queue for pricey drinks at bars run by external caterers the member at West Heath can go to the fridge donated by a house proud member and pour a glass of cold wine, and if the club rules are observed, record the purchase in the honesty book. From an advantage point above the three grass courts with the sun behind her she can in the second week observe quality tennis and look forward to a gourmet supper, her appetite increased by the slight uncertainty that the member who volunteered to Sultan to cook, may not have noted the event in his diary.



On finals day the Club ratchets itself up to an even higher level of tennis and social excellence. Two smart ladder seats will be transported from the nearby Cumberland; the grass will be cut short, and clearly marked using the special machine where a wheel revolves through a chalky reservoir and lays down a clear thick line for the bases service and tram lines. Referees will have been contacted, cakes and sandwiches made. A modern barbecue with sizeable grills and stainless steel bays might be sighted being trundled up the path by specialist cooks, by appointment for festivities later.

Players and spectators will know that the main event is about to start when Kevin Ryan, from America, mounts the ladder, conscious of fulfilling a function between high priest and promoter. The contestants are aware that this is their sign to complete the preliminaries and cease 'knocking up.' Kevin will announce the contestants in a manner reminiscent of a boxing ring:

On my right, five times champion, and from France is Cedric de la Chaise and on my left from Rosslyn Hill in Hampstead, Mark Stapleton. Play will begin in one minute.

The spectator who closes her eyes, ignores the seasonal warmth, substitutes in her mind's ear 'the fight' for 'play' could be with William Hazlitt in early nineteenth century Berkshire, with THE FANCY and at the prize fight.

Meanwhile back in the 21st Century slightly to the left of the bulk of the spectator's vision, the ladies will be starting their singles, and Mallika Sood, will single handedly reduce the average age of the players of both courts by ten years, and likely take her third cup.

Peter Davies' reports of the all finals since 2000 are recorded at www.westheathlhc.co.uk, accessible via the Champions page on the web site. Here is an example:

The highlight of the day was the Mixed Doubles Final, featuring Mark and Ludmilla Stapleton against Sultan Gangji and Christine Thompson. The Stapletons got off to the faster start and took the first set 6-2, but Sultan and Christine came back in the second set to take it 6-3. The ensuing Champions tiebreak was very close, but Sultan (playing to justify his choice of seeds for this event) and Christine just gained the edge to take it 10-8 for a 2-6 6-3 [10-8] victory.



Significant players of this second half century can be identified by stepping into the club house, freshly hoovered for the occasion, and observing the honours boards. A criterion of three singles championships in a decade identifies the most notable players of this period and they are shown in the charts that follow this narrative. Four players each approach a total of ten singles titles. They are Jean Pateman (57 to 73) Jane Boyle (76 to 01) Sultan Gangji (76 to 90) Mark Stapleton (96 to 03). In the fast lane are Cedric de La Chaise (04 to 08) and Mallika Sood (07 to 08).

Too long an observation of these boards would place the visitor in the way of the spectator's main event of the day which is afternoon tea. He may mingle informally with the singles participants and offer condolences or congratulations as appropriate. The events will be discussed and analysed and preparations made for the outstanding doubles competitions. Rather later the party and

barbecue will complete the day as the Champion's Ball does at Wimbledon.



Many experienced players avoid the Club on the Sunday following. The cleaner restores order on Monday. The neighbours, in their large houses, no doubt heave a collective sigh of relief. August is a properly quiet month at West Heath.

5. Competitive Play Inter Club

During the 1950s and 1960s the Club would field teams of six players in three pairs to play a match against neighbouring clubs. Teams could be ladies men's or mixed. They would then have been what we would describe as friendly that is not being part of the Middlesex League (Competition). The Ladies team strengthened by addition of players from the Daleham (which club in St Johns Wood closed to make way for the American School) and encouraged by Jean Pateman joined the League in 1971 and were soon joined by a second team. These teams had such success that in October 1974 the Journal (presumably the originator of the Camden Journal) could report that the teams had five promotions between them in the three years that they had been playing. The success continued so that by 1982 the Ladies 1 team had progressed through the five divisions of the North East Area to the East Intermediate (one division beneath the premier) which they won in that year and so were promoted, I think, for a couple of years to the Premier (East) Division. The devotion of the Ladies to the game in this period is demonstrated by a story told me separately by Jean Pateman and Jane Boyle. Jean provided a large quantity of newspapers for the home team to move about the courts mopping up the surplus moisture before one important game so that play could be completed before nightfall.

Where the Ladies led the Men followed and 1975 sees the West Heath heading Division VI and in 1977 West Heath I head Division IV. I remember that when I joined the Cub in 1970 Derek Barratt was the men's Captain, succeeded a year or two later by Richard Coffey, and then Kevin Ryan. Kevin recalls that he persuaded Sultan Ganji to take the leadership from him in 1975 a role which he has handled apparently effortlessly but not uneventfully, in the 34 years since then. His role is considered in the next section.

The Club's teams now (2009) play in the following Middlesex Leagues

<i>Team</i>	<i>Division</i>
<i>Ladies I</i>	<i>Division II</i>
<i>Men's I</i>	<i>Division I</i>
<i>Ladies II</i>	<i>Division III</i>
<i>Men's II</i>	<i>Division V</i>



Two veterans teams compete in the winter.

Ladies Captains over the period include Helen Thomas, Jean Pateman, Briony Newington, Jean Arnot, Joy Welch, Margaret Clarke, Eve Crosland, Janet Langdon, Jane Boyle, Liz Goodfellow, Janet O'Connor, Penny Northway, Lesley South, and Ros Norkett (not in order)

Men's Captains include Bob Fraser, Donald Iles, Derek Barrett, Richard Coffey, Kevin Ryan, and from 1975 Sultan Gangji.

The scheduling of matches is important, particularly so in a small club where there is a high demand on the courts. Fixtures secretaries during the period include the late Christine Fraser, Rachel Boley (now Gangji) and Sally Tornow.

Chair Umpires

Mention should also be made of chair umpires who by their static nature during the match, and their taking of the chair repeatedly over a period of years stay in the memory. Generally, for some reason, they are also team players. Mention has been made of Kevin Ryan; John Knight has served the Club frequently, as have John Fox and for the ladies, for such they are at West Heath, Eve Crosland, Christine Fraser, Sally Tornow, and more recently Moira

Duncan and Marjan Denis. In the early years the late John Pateman, not I think a team player, often umpired.

Significant Competitors

Ladies

<i>Period</i>	<i>Significant Players 1</i>	<i>Significant Players 2</i>
Fifties	Pateman 57 to 59	
Sixties	Pateman 62 to 66	
Seventies	Boyle 76 to 79	Pateman 72/3
Eighties	Wild 87 to 90	Boyle 80/1
Nineties	Willis 91 to 93	
Noughties	Boyle 00/01	Sood 07/08

Men

<i>Period</i>	<i>Significant Players 1</i>	<i>Significant Players 2</i>
Fifties	Slingsby 53 to 55, 58.	
Sixties	Lomas 60/1, 64, 65.	Sinclair 67 to 69
Seventies	Price 70, 72, 73	Gangji 76, 78/9
Eighties	Gangji 80/1, 83/4, 87,	
Nineties	Stapleton 96 to 99	Gangji 90, Spencer 91
Noughties	De la Chaise 04 to 08	Stapleton 01 to 03

7. Management to 1986

For a small organisation West Heath has devoted a wealth of time and experience on management during the fifty odd years on which I am writing; I have read six A4 volumes of minutes covering the period from 1950 until 1984. I have interviewed a number of people mainly from the early part of the period fifties sixties and seventies. I was on the managing Committee from 1975 to 1981 and again I think from October 1996 to October 2001. I have researched though not comprehensively. This account remains selective.

Ken Percival writes (letter on club web site in response to Ludwig's history) of a new guard taking over after the war with the appointment of Paddy Agar as chairman and himself as treasurer. (Letter on web site). Donald Iles acted as secretary for about nine years from 1953. During this period the club had no formal legal structure and would not have needed to file accounts at Companies House. For commercial relations with outside bodies particularly the Metropolitan Water Board it would have relied on guarantors for the lease payments acting on behalf of other members. Two events in the mid fifties were to change that. There was a defalcation of approximately £200 by the treasurer in 1956. This would be at least £4,000 in today's terms. Also there were a series of works to bring mains sanitation and electricity to the clubhouse, which involved substantial financial commitment. The guarantors no doubt felt the need for more formal structures which relieved them of potential financial liability. Accordingly the Club was formed into a limited Company. The original subscribers to the company included Donald Iles, Hospital Administrator, F.R McQuown, Barrister at Law, Secretary and Chair respectively at the time as well as two people known to many current players – the late Bob Fraser deceased son of Sir Robert, Chair of the LTA (and also a member) and Celia Malcolm who is still playing at West Heath.

The then current members of the Club joined the subscribers as members of the company. The assets and income of the Club were vested in the company – in the event of dissolution members were, and presumably are, liable to contribute £1 to any net liabilities. The Memorandum of Association (3) gives the Objects for which the Club is established as:

- (A) To promote, organise, manage and carry on by means of a Club or Clubs the games, sports, sports or pastimes of Tennis, Table Tennis, Badminton, Bowls and any other sports or pastimes.*
- (B) To establish, maintain, and conduct a Club for the purpose of Social Intercourse and Recreation, and to afford members of the Club and their friends all the usual privileges,*

advantages, conveniences, and accommodation of a Recreation and Games Club.

The use of capitals must have been archaic even in 1956. The reader may note what a comparatively small part tennis (or Tennis) plays in the stated aims. The rest of the Articles C to N equally mention Tennis once more only in connection with competitions.

A Special Resolution on the 4th Day of September 1956 provides that

1 ... *The provisions of Section 110 shall be observed by the Club*

The legal matters in connection with the formation of the Club were taken care of by F.R McQuown, Barrister, and Frank Slingsby, Solicitor, of Willis and Willis Chancery Lane. The latter succeeded the former as chair in 1972. The then Secretary of the Club Donald Iles, succeeded Frank Slingsby in 1966 in an election which unusually was contested by himself, the late Ernest Welsman and the late John Pateman. John Pateman succeeded to the Chair in 1972 when Donald moved away. Ernest remained as Treasurer; I can in my minds eye recall him exhorting new members to sign the Register of Members in accordance with Section 110. Ordinarily Section 110 would show members interests in the company. As West Heath does not have a share capital, is a Company Limited by Guarantee not having a Share Capital, the signing of the register confirms members' liability in the (unlikely) event of a winding up – then as now to contribute one pound.

Donald Iles' Committee reviewed the Management of The Club at a meeting in February 1967 and found little need to change arrangements for quite a large board and sub committees supporting the main areas of work activity specifically Grounds Premises and Bar and Catering.

A relatively large board ensured that on delicate matters a consensus of opinion was more likely to be obtained. It was however felt to be important that non-board members should be brought on to committees.

John Pateman (when he took over in 1972) approved and developed this corporate approach favoured in the sixties and seventies; I recall the Grounds Committee with John Gilbert and John Mitchell Premises with Pam Stoughton Harris and Peter Krasucki and bar and Catering with Margaret Clarke. He (John) wrote A Handbook for Directors which shows an approach both meticulous and comprehensive. It could (almost) be released again today. The current Tea Mandarin Elena Valarche would not though approve the gender distinctions on Page 9:

The Catering Organiser or one of the lady Committee members arranges for lady members to provide teas at weekends throughout the summer season giving advice where necessary.

Men are expected to do the washing up.

John's use of language was careful (he was amongst other things a classical scholar) and reflects the (actual) practice in the Club at the time.

The Minutes of the AGM on September 28 1976 read:

A hearty vote of thanks was (then) extended to the retiring Chairman by Mr S Orwell who reminded the Club how much it owed to Mr Pateman for all the work he had done in several capacities, over many years.

John had been Chairman, Secretary and Chairman of Grounds Committee and worked with Jean Pateman on Middlesex LTA Associates matters (Including the series on pioneer clubs in Middlesex). Their daughter Elisabeth managed the teas and tea rota for a while.

The late Edward Barnes chaired his first meeting at the Club on October 5th 1976. Edward was an Audit Manager at a very long established firm of Chartered Accountants Spicer and Pegler at Moorgate who also produced textbooks on Company Accounts, The Principles of Accountancy, and Insolvency and Bankruptcy. He conducted meetings quite briskly, but also with a gravitas to suggest that all matters needed and would receive careful attention.

Readers will be relieved that at Agenda Item 12 of his first meeting:

The question of men taking a more active role in catering was discussed

Saddened that

No positive proposals were made

But slightly relieved that

Men should be encouraged to take on more responsibility for weekend teas

(An exhortation on which Connie Welsman, Ludwig Berlin and Elena Valarche as Samovar Tsars later in this period could build)

Edward's period of office, if I may call it that, that extended I think (readers may be relieved that the Minute books I have extend only to September 1984) until the AGM on October 1 1985.

This period covered or included:

- Reinstatement of 3rd Grass Court following collapse, by flood, of Westfield Wall (76/77)
- Construction of the 'padded' bar (Krasucki, Clarke-Jones, Gangji) (1977)
- The Brown/Sudbery report on surfaces and maintenance (1980)
- Appointment of Pepe Vilarelle as grounds contractor (1981)
- Relaying of the hard courts (Pepe) (1981)
- Replacement of the stop netting (Peppe/Working Parties) (1981/3)
- Planning Application for floodlights (1984)

Jane Boyle and Kevin Ryan also identify this as a period when the ambience of the Club changed rather – there was an influx of younger people and the social life was more 'singles' oriented. (This was described under social above).

Interestingly a disproportionate number of the entrants were trainee accountants or recently qualified. Janet Wilkinson, Tony Spencer, Carol Jardine and Gordon James who later joined the Army, all fall into this category.

There was, within the Committee that Edward chaired, a difference in opinion about how and whether the Club should be developed. This is, well, highlighted, by the matter of floodlights on which a sub committee was formed and chaired initially by Wilfrid Clarke Jones and then by Bill Clark. A reminder of Edwards's periodically formal style is that when the matter was discussed he would, the minutes show, resign the chair temporarily the better to voice his opposition to changes he thought would upset the gentle ambience of the Club. He would in extremis use any material to support his case. Vanity permits this extract from a Meeting on April 28 1983

The Chairman drew the Sub-Committee's attention to a very comprehensive report which had been produced in 1980 by Miss Brown and Mr Sudbery. He anticipated that the report produced by the current sub-committee would be of a similar standard.

At about this time (1984) there was also strong opposition to the Club's Liquor Licence from a disgruntled recent purchaser of a house on the corner of Ferncroft and Croftway who complained of noise late night drinking, other activities perhaps, and the bonk of tennis balls.

These matters, the floodlights and the licence, were not brought to a conclusion until after the late Wilfrid Clarke Jones had assumed leadership of the Club in 1985 or 1986. These Minutes are not to hand but in conclusion of this section I am able to give excerpts of the testimony the Club gathered mostly from current or ex members but also from nearby residents.

First though, Sergeant Dumville of the Metropolitan Police at Hampstead Police Station's response to a request for licensing forms brought the unusual response:

With reference to your letter of 21st inst. Police do not keep forms for the renewal of registration certificates. These are obtained from the Oyez Publishing Company for a small fee. Their details are in the telephone directory. When you have completed the application forms in triplicate these should be sent or handed in to Clerkenwell Magistrates who will allocate a date of hearing. Please be kind enough to supply me with the dates of birth and heights of the principle members of the Club together with their dates of birth.

The Club responded as requested. The large average height of the Committee is noticeable – Edward 6 feet, William Clarke 6 feet, Chris Peake 6 feet 2 inches as is the cosmopolitan variety of their birthplaces Leeds, Canchar India, Zanzibar, Rio de Janeiro. John Fox, a senior government statistician, who was shortly to become secretary may be able to indicate whether this (height and diverse birth place of a group) shows suitability to run a bar or likely criminal intent.

Alarmed perhaps by the Police response the Club set out to get testimonies to its character, denigrated by the new resident; these follow and on these positive notes this section concludes:

The late Richard Rogers JP wrote pointing out:

In the course of house buying it is customary to make ' searches' and various other enquiries and therefore our new neighbour must have been fully aware that there was a tennis club next to his property...

There is a nice letter of support from David Gestetner Group Managing Director and Joint Chairman of Gestetner Holdings whose

Important overseas customers invariably request to be invited again

And Sir Robert Fraser KGB, KBE, MA.

... Think(s) that many of us who are neighbours (for some considerable time) have indeed been fortunate not least in the manner in which the club has been administered

There are quite a few other expressions of support. The last words though go to Jean Pateman who writes as the then Chair of the Middlesex County Lawn Tennis Association's Associates.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

For the past thirty years, West Heath LTC has to my knowledge provided a pleasant recreational facility in the Hampstead Area

Its members are drawn from many walks of life, and such is the friendly concern for the welfare of others, that even after absences overseas, former members return to take part in activities which have changed little in the passage of time.

There have always been people prepared to make every effort to consider those in the neighbourhood, and indeed a high proportion have served on committees and contributed to the administration of tennis in the County.

The simple facilities, run by volunteers and augmented by a little outside help, include a bar which helps to generate a proportion of the Club's income and to add to the enjoyment of members, their guests and visiting teams.

At no time has there been unseemly behaviour in my experience, and of course the Club has existed on these premises for a very long time.

Jean may be a little optimistic here; it is though outside the scope of this work to attempt to identify any contrary examples other than those already and obliquely mentioned.

8. The Period from 1986

Wilfrid Clarke Jones took over the chair in 1986. He had for some years before then been Treasurer, and previously with Rosemary, his wife, de facto Social Secretary. By the time he became chair he had already been a member for twenty or so years, was steeped in the traditions of the Club and set out to maintain them. He resolved the matter of the licence which initially magistrates only allowed for a year at a time. He allowed the matter of floodlights to drop. He was both an opera singer and manager of what is now known as human resources in a large timber company. Sultan Gangji advises that he acted as unofficial campaign manager for him in the 'contested captaincy of 79'

Sultan, himself, took over the Mens' captaincy from Kevin Ryan in September 1975 and was associated with nearly all aspects of Club management over the succeeding period as well as the continuing rise of the men's team. He did, he tells me, face hurdles, such as questions before the meeting, as to whether West Heath should have a captain, born out of the country, and not originally resident in it. Well, all questions are legitimately raised, but this invites the common sense answer, that gender, Club membership, leadership and tennis ability are the only relevant considerations here.

Later, in 1979, there was a contested election for the captaincy when Bill Thom accepted a nomination to stand as well. The result showed a clear majority for Sultan (42/17). His forceful style, personal charisma, regard for result, winning general but not universal approval. For at least the period from then he has been closely associated with captaining the (men's) team, organising the club tournament, and running social events. Since 2004 he has also been running the grounds contract. He was associated with the introduction of the 1997 watering system and organised its much improved 2008 replacement as well as the 2009 replacement of the stop netting round all courts. From about 1979 to 2002 he was employed by the LTA/ITF, umpired at several Wimbledon Finals/ Davis Cup Finals and for a period was in charge of officiating at tennis events, and overall charge of officials at Wimbledon.

This intimate knowledge of the national and international scene has substantially benefitted the Club particularly in its web reported tournament, gourmet dinners, and Christmas lunches. Kevin Ryan sums it up like this:

You would have to travel far and wide to find a person who would commit themselves so deeply to a Club, he is Mr West Heath, an icon in North East Middlesex, post match suppers enlivened by his tales of the circuit.



Alan Rogers succeeded to the Chair in, I think, 1991, like Wilfrid after a turn as treasurer. It is interesting to note that the three chairs between 76 and 99 Barnes, Clarke-Jones and Rogers were all either accountants or previous treasurers or both. Accountants like lawyers are process oriented. Alan valued Sultan's support energy and knowledge but was clear that the Committee had elected him to lead the Club. He much valued the Club as it was, with its gentle ambience and like Moira Duncan who succeeded him in 1999 worked hard to make it a pleasant place for all members. As on earlier occasions there were some who thought that the generally loss making bar should close but he viewed this as an essential part of its social activity. His period coincided with lease negotiations brought to a successful conclusion and the quite difficult first major watering system, satisfactory only as an aid to Pepe. (Alan and Gabrielle and their three children now live in Lancashire)

Before briefly covering the period during this century reference should be made to two solicitors who between the have looked after the Club's finances these last twenty or so years since Wilfrid became chair. They are Chris Peake and Derek Councilll who have carried out their tasks knowledgeably and efficiently assuring that the annual presentation of their accounts is never other than both predictable and professional. Chris also assisted the Club by personally attending to the quite considerable areas of the estate not included in the grounds contract.

In a similar spirit Paul Rubie has carried out the tasks of Secretary with energy and efficiency since the mid nineties. The work of these essential functions is very considerable, would very quickly require the attention of the Chair if not carried out properly and disrupt the order which member's value. Paul notes that a member from the late thirties would see little difference in the physical aspects of the Club. The honorary directors though, need to be

increasingly aware of government, local government and sports body regulations. Longer working hours, and a greater variety of commercial leisure activities, have an effect in making the club less important to members as a mid week social venue.

Julia Abbott has been Committee member responsible for parties probably for longer than she cares to remember.

Marjan Denis fulfils the modern role of communications with the old one of catering with equal energy and efficiency.

Moira Duncan has guided the Club these last ten years from 1999 with a lightness of touch fitting to these modern times. Her period in office has included:

Setting up of the Web Site by Peter Davies 2000

Centenary Dinner and Dance 2002

Special West Heath Shirts 2002

New Grounds Contractor 2005

Professional Computerised Watering System 2008

Replacement of the Stop Netting 2009

Her Committee wished to acknowledge the work of Sultan both within and as roving ambassador for the Club and appointed him President at the Centenary Event in 2002. Sultan's longevity in Club Management is only matched by that of C.A.E Percival between 1912 and 1955. Moira's period as Chair is only exceeded by that of F.R McQuown between April 51 and October 62.

The expressions of goodwill to the Club, from around the world, which Moira received in response to Centenary invites, makes me optimistic that some readers will have persevered to here!

The End

**WEST HEATH LAWN TENNIS CLUB
CHAIRS and PRESIDENTS**

1913	Walter Legg	
1914	Mr C.A.E. Percival	
1916	Mr Margetson	
1919	Mr Welby Clarke	
1923	Mr C.A.E. Percival	
1926	Mr Wm Edwards	
1931	Mr C.C. Duncum King	
1933	Miss Monkhouse	
1935	Dr Shann	Mr C.A.E. Percival
1936	Mr Horley	
1938		Mr C.A.E. Percival
1947	Mr P. J. Agar	
1952	Mr F.R. Mcquown	
1962	Mr Frank Slingsby	
1966	Mr Donald Iles	
1972	Mr John Pateman	
1976	Mr Edward Barnes	
1986	Mr Wilfrid Clarke-Jones	
1991	Mr Alan Rogers	
1999	Moirra Duncan	
2002		Mr Sultan Gangji

Archive

Item	Dates	
Minute Book 1	May 1912 to April 1951	
Minute Book 2	July 1937 to October 1956	
Minute Book 3	July 1956 to October 1962	
Minute Book 4	March 1963 to February 1966	
Minute book 5	May 1966 to September 1971	
Minute Book 6	March 1972 to March 1977	
Minute Book 7	September 77 to September 1984	
Lever arch File Circulars	1969 to 1984	
Lever Arch file Licences	1950 to 1984	
Memorandum and Articles of Association	July 1956	

References

Middlesex County Lawn Tennis Association Official Handbooks 1975 to 1986

(Pioneer Clubs of Middlesex - West Heath by John Pateman in LTA Handbook 1985 H. Gearings of Ashford, Kent 1985))

Tennis's Strangest Matches, Peter Seddon (Robson books London 2001)

(See Joad's Gambit Birkbeck College 1931) for Professor Joad's bad behaviour on court)

West Heath Lawn Tennis Club



Part I

The First Half-Century History

by Ludwig Berlin, May 2002

Part II

Some Reflections from 1950 or So

by Vince Sudbery, June 2009

vinrosa2000@yahoo.co.uk

Postscript

Early Memories of West Heath

Ken Percival, November 2000

There were several earlier family connections which should be in the club records, but my first memory of the club was in 1928 at the age of 8, during the summer holidays when home from boarding school.

My father was C. A. E. Percival. For his services as treasurer from 1910 to 1926 the members of the club presented him with a silver bowl, now owned by my nephew. A great family friend, Basil Clarke, was secretary. Committee meetings were often held at our home in Honeybourne Road.

My mother (maiden name S. Gwen Moreland) was also a good tennis player. My parents married in 1919, but I do not know whether they met through the club. Mother's sisters were Ida and Joan Moreland, who were members, although they also belonged to the Cumberland Lawn Tennis Club.

My maternal grandfather was Richard Moreland who lived in Frognaal and had connections with the Hampstead Cricket and Bowls Club¹. The family firm of Richard Moreland and Son, Engineers from late 18th century and Structural Steelwork fabricators from 1910, designed and fabricated the original roof of the Wimbledon Centre Court, only recently replaced with a larger one. From this connection the family held debenture tickets which I was allowed to use on a few occasions after World War II. The Moreland Hall in Hampstead is named after him, if this is still in existence.

Dorothy Percival, father's sister, lived near by at 57 Redington Road. This had a grass court at the end of the garden, from which a path went down to Ferncroft Avenue. My aunt was also a member.

My sister and I were junior members, not allowed to play on Saturdays, and there was no play on Sundays before World War II. We would often be at the club with our parents and climb around the outside of the courts looking for lost tennis balls or picking blackberries on the slope next to Westfield College. At the far end of the top lawn, when bored, we would play French Cricket and, on some occasions, climb the wall and go on to the brick water tanks, again, ostensibly, looking for lost balls.

I was always keen on tennis and at school was in the first batch of boys allowed to play tennis instead of the cricket that was normally compulsory around 1936. I have dim memories of some junior tennis tournaments in the summer holidays at West Heath.

I am not quite sure when the hard courts² were built, but I believe my father helped with some of the costs and, if my memory serves me correctly, he was not finally repaid until after the war.

I was released from the Royal Engineers in June 1946, by which time I was married with a son. We created a flat on the top floor of the family home at 57 Redington Road - the house with the grass court and path. My aunt was very upset when I dug up half the court to grow vegetables, as we were encouraged to do, to help to feed the family. The West Heath committee asked me to be treasurer and asked Paddy Agor (then single) to be Secretary. The aforementioned footpath was very useful as it came out opposite Paddy's house.

I can't remember whether the hard courts were used during the War, but I can't believe anyone was around to look after the grass courts.

After the war we found an ex-army Irishman as a groundsman. Pat McMulkin was probably more of a handyman and some of the good players felt he was not getting the best out of the grass courts and he was given notice after four years. As a person he was very likeable and always helpful. He looked after the bar too, which brings back memories of the very cold winter of '47 (or was it '48?) when syphons of soda water froze and, being under pressure, exploded everywhere!

In 1946, at the start of the season, for the first and only time I had to use my army reserve rank to obtain a Union Jack from Gamages so we could fly it on Saturdays.

We obtained used tennis balls from Wimbledon - you probably still do³. The club used to get centre and number 1 court tickets for the Championships for which there was a ballot. In those days they were amateur matches and I can remember going to the final of the Ladies Singles - was it Yvonne Goolagong? - when it was rained off and played on the Monday. There was no Sunday play in those days.

One AGM was very lively, when apart from Paddy and myself all the older members of the committee were replaced with younger and newer members. Was it '48⁴?

Around this time my father was made President, which pleased him immensely. He died in '55. I moved out to Hertfordshire with my family in 1952.

I remember two club dances. One was held in the restaurant above John Barnes and there was another below a block of flats in the Finchley Road, near West End Lane. At the latter a young lady had too much to drink and was seen in the ladies cloakroom spending a long time trying to get her hands clean - she was wearing black kid

gloves. She was the daughter of a Judge but I can't remember her name.

I hope with other club records these recollections may be of use to club members interested in the past history of West Heath.

Ken Percival
November 2000

Editor's footnotes

1. *Now merged with the Cumberland, with tennis replacing the bowls at some stage.*
2. *Now known as shale.*
3. *Not always true. The balls used at the 2001 men's team practise had "Roland Garros" stamped on them and in 2009 a number of social tennis balls came from the Cumberland ITF Futures tournament and were stamped "Head ATP"!*
4. *Records confirm this was indeed the 1948 AGM.*

WEST HEATH EVENT CALENDAR & MATCH FIXTURES 2019

St. Margaret's School use the hard courts, typically from 12 noon to 4 pm on weekdays in term.

See www.westheathlhc.co.uk for precise times and term dates. Home matches are in bold.

All matches start at 18.30. Home matches are played on the 3 grass courts – weather permitting.

APRIL

24 Wednesday	18:30	Men's team practice	Home	Men
29 Monday	18:30	Ladies' team practice	Home	Ladies

MAY

2 Thursday		Brampton I	Away	Ladies' I
7 Tuesday	19.00	Doubles Coaching		
11 Saturday	14.30	Wimbledon Ballot		
13 Monday		Mercury I	Home	Ladies' II
14 Tuesday	19.00	Doubles Coaching		
17 Friday		Will to Win (RP) I	Home	Men's I
20 Monday		Finchley II	Away	Ladies' II
20 Monday		TLI (officially an away match)	Home	Men's II
21 Tuesday	19.00	Doubles Coaching		
22 Wednesday		Drive I	Home	Ladies' I
24 Friday		South Hampstead I	Home	Men's I
27 Monday	14.30	Bank Holiday American Tournament		
28 Tuesday		Cumberland IV	Away	Men's I
29 Wednesday		Finchley III	Home	Ladies' II
30 Thursday		Cumberland V	Home	Men's II

JUNE

4 Tuesday	19.00	Doubles Coaching		
4 Tuesday	20.15	Annual General Meeting		
6 Thursday 6		Elmwood I	Home	Men's II
6 Thursday		Temple Fortune I	Away	Ladies' I
7 Friday		Globe II	Home	Men's I
12 Wednesday		Brondesbury II	Home	Ladies' I
19 Wednesday		Northway	Home	Ladies' II
20 Thursday		UCS I	Away	Men's II
21 Friday		Coolhurst III	Away	Men's I
22 Saturday	14.30	Mid- Summer American Tournament		
27 Thursday		Chandos III	Away	Ladies' I
28 Friday		South Hampstead	Away	Ladies' II

JULY

4 Thursday		Temple Fortune I	Home	Men's II
8 Monday		Temple Fortune III	Home	Ladies' II
9 Tuesday		Elmwood I	Away	Ladies' I
11 Thursday		Drive I	Home	Men's I
12 Friday		Club Tournament begins		
16 Tuesday		Will to Win (RP) II	Away	Men's II
22 Mon – 25 Thurs		Gourmet Dinners		
27 Saturday		Finals Day + Barbecue		
28 Sunday		Reserve date for finals (if bad weather)		
29 Monday		Finchley I	Home	Ladies' I
29 Monday		Brondesbury I	Away	Men's I

AUGUST

1 Thursday		Finchley Manor III	Home	Men's II
2 Friday		Totteridge IV	Away	Ladies' II
26 Monday	14.30	Bank Holiday American Tournament		

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Committee

President/Captain

Committee

Committee

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Juniors

Students/Under 21

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Juniors

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