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Purley Tennis Club - A decade

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PURLEY TENNIS CLUB - A DECADE

Who, if any, of those intrepid pioneers at the inaugural meeting of the Purley Tennis Club, could have imagined the changes that would be rung in the ensuing ten years? The sheer dedication of the members, helped on occasions by a little nudge from Committee, has earned the Club the recognition it now holds in the community. Tennis in those early days had a very different meaning to that which it has today ...

All players, irrespective of age, had an uncanny knack of being able to make balls bounce to left or right with no apparent spin action. Few, I fear, could have predicted which - divots won more points than players!

Then there was the classic case of the member who volunteered to mark out the courts, unaware that his shoes were at least an inch shorter than a foot. When the court had been duly measured out in pigeon steps and marked it was found to be somewhat shorter than standard. Two obvious actions could have remedied the situation, but that chosen was a little more obscure ... It was found that by marking the court narrower at one end, the distortion of the perspective made it appear to be the correct length - at least it did from one end!

And there were the endless days of jumbling around the neighbourhood like Wombles. Cars were banished from garages to make storage space - all in the cause of financial survival.

Today the Club boasts a membership of 140 and, thanks to the far-sightedness of the Parish Council, we play on three superb hard courts. Junior and men's teams play in the Reading League and Club competitions are held. The Junior sports Knock-Out competition has continued to grow in popularity and is now a regular feature in the parish calendar. The Club holds social events for all ages throughout the year. The last, a meal with

live folk entertainment at the Rosewood Hall, Pangbourne, was a resounding success.

The end of the decade has seen the sad resignation of two Club stalwarts: Ian Camfield, Chairman and Founder, and Audrey Upham, Secretary and behind the scenes "brick". Ian was presented with an inscribed silver plate and Audrey an inscribed carriage clock. Ken Mercer was also presented with an inscribed carriage clock. All in recognition of their immeasurable services rendered to the Club.

The Committee feel that it is indeed a fine tribute to the members that the Club has prospered so, particularly when one considers that "home" is represented by a two-sided mini-pavilion, with extensions, that owes its origins to an Alder Valley bus shelter and which was cherishingly designed and supervised by Ken, our architect-cum-carpenter-cum-plumber.

So what are our future plans? It is obvious that the Club has now reached the stage at which, if it is to continue to prosper, it must have a "home" of substance and utility. Visiting clubs, particularly league sides, need decent changing facilities. Members need a Club house where a Club "spirit" can be fostered - refreshments can be served and meetings held. I am sure these sentiments will be echoed by the other sports which also make use of the courts.

The courts have a unique position with a panoramic view of three unspoilt miles of "Wind in the Willows" country. And speaking of wind, it sure does blow across the valley! It would certainly enhance the appearance of the courts from the Recreation Ground, and for the residents on the south side of Beech Road, if they were screened and play could continue in otherwise adverse conditions.

A sub-committee has been formed to provide a purpose-built pavilion and Ken Mercer has been appointed our Negotiating Officer. The Club will also encourage and contribute to a scheme for planting quick-growing evergreens. My own sincere hope is that with these

facilities Purley Tennis Club will continue to thrive and be active in providing you, the growing Purley populace, with sport for pleasure or competition.

John Utton
Chairman, Pavilion Steering Committee.