

A History of Harrow Lawn Tennis Club—a revised
edition of Alastair Lack's* *Harrow Lawn Tennis
Club: a brief history, 1880–2000*
Editor: Michael Hammond

Acknowledgments: Wendy Driver, president (2009–2015)
Enid Silverstone, secretary (2009–)
Patti Axten, secretary (1999–2009)
Jean Keen, benefactor and friend

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* Alastair Lack, Harrow Lawn Tennis Club president (1995–2000)

Origins

The first record of the the club's existence comes from an article in the Harrow Gazette of July 17, 1880:

HARROW LAWN TENNIS CLUB.—A double-handed tournament (ladies and gentlemen) will be held on the club ground next Saturday, the 24th inst. Two racquets will be given as prizes.

1880 is fully eight years before the formation of the Lawn Tennis Association and only three years after the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club's first championships at Wimbledon and is believed to be the year in which Harrow LTC was founded. The only written evidence for this assertion comes from the Gazette as the club's earliest minutes of committee have disappeared. The loss of the minutes is a pity, but does explain why nobody knows to whom the prizes were awarded. (*Inst.* is, by the way, an abbreviation of the Latin *instante mense*, meaning a date of the current month.)

Archives

The Harrow Gazette¹ (1d. in 1880, 4 pages) is as well as being an evocative history of life in Harrow the only authoritative record of the matches and the events of Harrow Lawn Tennis Club as it was before 1893. The Gazette handsomely chronicles the club's activities, depending on the efforts of the club secretary to keep the newspaper informed and on the advertisements within its pages, advertisements that make evident the club's existence. In fact, by September 1880, two local outfitters, F.S. Winkley and W.L. Stevens, are advertising tennis coats, caps, sashes and ribbons in club colours, their colours going unrecorded. Three years earlier, ads for tennis racquets, nets and poles for sale had appeared, but no mention had been made of any local tennis club.

From 1893 onwards, however, more valuable than the Gazette are the minutes of the club's various meetings. Minutes of AGMs date from the first AGM in 1898; minutes of committee from five years earlier. The first book of minutes (up to 1893) were thrown away reputedly in a fit of carelessness, the guilty party unidentified. Nevertheless, the surviving minutes offer some consolation. They are at once happy and sad. They tell of barbecues and pimm's parties and of expulsions and obituaries. Unsurprisingly, they are, as the club's chronology below makes evident, a better diary of financial and constitutional matters than of tournaments and match results. Leitmotifs

¹Copies of the Harrow Gazette (1855–1921) may be found in the British Library Newspaper Collection. They used also to be available on microfiche in the Harrow Civic Centre Library.

include the balance of the books, the membership (worries usually about its decline), the lease, the courts, the move towards greater democracy for members and the continual adjustment of the rules.

A modern member will wonder at the time spent by the club and its committees on scrutinising the rulebook. The deliberations, for instance, of the 1928 AGM are representative of thousands more: “Boys and girls over sixteen may play during recognized school holidays upon the introduction of a member at five shillings per week. This subscription entitles them to play at all times with or without the member introduction.” Similarly representative, a 2008 committee approves a revised etiquette: Point 18 directs that underarm serves be allowed, but observes that it is considered good manners to warn one’s opponent. A supplementary etiquette concerns league and other matches. In it, Point 8 directs that spectators should neither enter into court disputes nor show disproportionate partisanship.

Courts

In its time, the club has had four homes: West Acre (1880–1926), the King’s Head (1926–1961), Peterborough Hill (1962–1981) and Harrow School (1981–).

West Acre, in the grounds of the Harrow School house, is as far as can be reasonably ascertained, the club’s first home. The first lease there, with Mr J. Stogdon, housemaster of West Acre, expires in 1896. Thereafter the club and Mr Stogdon agree terms. He dies in 1919, but his wife continues to lease the courts until 1926, when she terminates the agreement and Harrow moves to ground owned by the King’s Head Hotel (also, a public house). There, the club remains until 1961, when the land is sold for property development². The club subsequently moves to the foot of Peterborough Hill into premises owned by Harrow School, and in 1962 the school leases the courts to the club. The arrangement is ended in 1981, when the imminent expiry of the lease³, the destruction of the clubhouse—in 1979 vandals had burn-down the clubhouse, the criminals never caught—and the uncertain financial position of the club lead to a search for new premises. Later in ’81, club and school agree a new annual lease for the use of the courts and the Boyer Webb Pavilion, an agreement that continues to this day.

1982 to 2002 is for the club a time of stability. 2003 is, by contrast, a time of upheaval. A multi-million-pound redevelopment of the Harrow School playing fields begins on both sides of the Hill. Work progresses swiftly. By 2005 much of the work is complete: a Tartan™ athletics track has replaced the school’s cinder oval, and a showcase rugby pitch called Sunley Field is

²The King’s Head closed c.2001. On the site now is residential-block Leigh Court.

³The lease in 1981 was with Heathfield School. Heathfield had bought the land from Harrow School in the interim.

laid at the centre of the new track. The school drill square and five tennis courts had used to be where Sunley Field now is, but the square and the new courts moved to the foot of Garlands Lane. Replacing the old all-weather ones, the 12 acrylic courts (both porous and non-porous) are named the Beckwith Courts after the brothers⁴ who jointly funded them.

To celebrate the inauguration of the new courts on October 2, 2004, the club throws a party and invites everyone to test the new playing surfaces. It hires a ball machine and a speed gun and holds an exhibition match by club coaches. The players—moustachioed gentlemen players with wooden rackets—the ballgirls and the umpire all wear traditional Victorian dress to echo the club's early years. The new courts are a joy.

Finances

Despite its ever-increasing expenses, the club has always tried to minimize its members' subscriptions. Some dates and figures are informative. In 1898 year subscriptions are one guinea for gentlemen and 15 shillings for ladies. The annual subscription for ladies is increased in 1905 to one guinea, an increase that brings it into line with that of the gentlemen. Subscriptions increase slowly year on year. By 1928 members each pay £2–10s. 16 years later, the treasurer takes the bold decision to double the fees for anyone who fails to pay by a February 1 deadline; the club, with very few members at the time, is in discussions over closure. By 1948 individuals each pay £2–15s. By 1967 it is four guineas, and by 2019 it was £[???]. Subscriptions, after all, must increase if the club is to meet its financial obligations.

Causing controversy and consternation are the financial terms of the club's various leases. In 1900 Mr Stogdon reduces the rent to £15 a year (from what figure is unrecorded) in response to fears that the club can continue only if the rent at West Acre is reduced; the first of several financial crises is averted. In 1926 the AGM approves a scheme to acquire at a rent of £75 a year a new ground at the King's Head, there to provide two hard courts and to put in order two grass ones. The following year's AGM decides that the grass courts be made into two more hard courts. In 1962 club and school agree a £25 a year 21-year lease on the courts at the foot of Peterborough Hill. It is towards the cost of a clubhouse and new courts that club member Betty Siddons donates £1,000. Without her gift, it seems probable that the club would have disbanded. In 1981 the club moves for the last time. Harrow agrees a lease⁵ of £1,000 a year or £15 a member whichever is the greater.

⁴The brothers are Peter Beckwith OBE (Elmfield, 1958) and Sir John Beckwith CBE (Drurys, 1960).

⁵The lease remains unsigned until 1983.

Ground Maintenance

A tennis club requires groundskeeping. Consequently, the club has often-times employed a groundsman, not always with happy results. In 1897 minutes record that Harper is not a success. Later, he is sacked. Subsequent groundsmen come and go, their wages fluctuating over the years. Thus, Smith in 1922 sees his wages reduced and, citing ill health, resigns the next year.

Money is always tight, so for members to do voluntary work is an almost annual necessity, as has been the periodic purchase of caustic soda to rid the courts of moss. In March 1941 three hundredweight of soda is spread on the courts. The watering system at the King's Head requires an overhaul in 1958, and the pond by no. 1 court is "full and malodorous".

The club in its West Acre days repeatedly allocates money to spread ashes on its cinder courts and to provide after-match baths when they are wanted. In 1893 balls are escaping beneath the wire netting; new netting bought, and in 1895 the clubroom, deemed by members to be a disgrace, has much work done to it. In 1919 the club allocates up to £100 to renovate the West Acre courts after the difficult days of the first world war. The King's Head courts are similarly repaired after the second.

Membership

By most clubs' standards, membership has usually been small, and worried committees have often tried to increase numbers. A 1969 committee, for instance, in a big effort, distributes to the Hill and to local independent schools 1,500 leaflets. The leaflets extol the benefits of the club, benefits that include, perhaps surprisingly, a children's sandpit and swing.

New people join only infrequently, and in most years some resign. There are, for instance, 19 resignations in 1924, though a more representative year is 1905, when minutes omit to record resignations or elections but reveal that membership is limited to only 75. Years later in 1977 membership has increased only slightly to 78 individuals and 36 families.

The histories of club and school overlap. The club's members are often also employees of Harrow School. Indeed, the club was founded by, among others, a school housemaster—a Mr Stogdon. Schoolmistress Alison Walker further illustrates the overlap for she was juniors' captain as long ago as 1958. In Miss Walker's day, though club and school overlapped each another they were independent. Today they are not. Their interdependence is evident as club officials—secretaries, treasurers and presidents alike—are often in the school's employ. What is more, staff⁶ and their families have privileged

⁶In fact staff of Harrow School, John Lyon and Orley Farm School are afforded a discount.

rates; the club is, after all, on school land.

The club used formally to elect its members. Playing-in used to be standard practice, a practice that tends to restrict membership. Carole Bellingr, who for many years chaired the club's meetings, was herself played-in by members of the 1975 ladies' team. The exercise was no formality either; candidates have been rejected. The committee of 1923, for instance, refuses membership to a Miss Harries and gives no reason for its decision. Thankfully, playing-in ceases soon after 1979, a consequence of which is to increase the size of the club.

An increased membership in the 1980s means Harrow receives a sizeable share of the Wimbledon ballot. An undisclosed percentage of Wimbledon tickets are shared between every tennis club in Britain that wants them. A privilege of joining an LTA-affiliated club is the chance to take part in the draw for these tickets and if successful to avoid the queues at Wimbledon. A 2008 rules change—the LTA introduces its individual British Tennis Membership—necessitates that to take part in the ballot every member be affiliated individually, albeit at no charge. As a consequence of this change and to ensure that it secures as many tickets as possible the club in 2008 enrolls all members who have failed to register themselves. The ballot takes place at the club's AGM, which has attendance increased from previous years.

Minutes of committee also recognize some oddities with little by way of explanation. Incongruities include the debarring of Harrow schoolboys during term in 1927 and the curious admission in 1938 of fellows of Oxford and Cambridge.

Meetings

As with any club, the committee and the membership have had their differences. In 1894 a general meeting is proposed to air members' grievances, and a disgruntled membership in 1896 accuses the committee of being self-elected.

Presumably to pacify the members, a March 1898 committee holds the club's first AGM. The meeting includes an election to committee of new officials and a presentation of the treasurer's report. This AGM takes place on court and is possibly the only time that a committee has enacted business on the playing surface for in subsequent years committees meet at all sorts of venues including private homes, the clubroom at West Acre, the Public Halls⁷ on the hill, the clubhouse on Peterborough Hill and lately the Boyer Webb Pavilion.

Committees on occasion meet in emergency. In 2008 an extraordinary committee convenes to investigate allegations of gamesmanship. Its minutes

⁷Now on the site of the old Public Halls at 51 High St is the restaurant bar Café Café.

explain nothing. At the most recent emergency gathering (August 19, 2017) members debate the courts' boundary fence and its imminent demolition. In April that year, it had emerged that in building the new courts, Harrow School had destroyed a public footpath and that its destruction had been illegal. The meeting, as it turns out, is futile. The law demands the restoration of the public right of way, regardless of how the club feels about the matter. (The chronology below explains more.)

The 2017 emergency meeting is understandably well attended. Less so, typical AGMs from the 1890s to the 1990s. They have about 14 or 15 attendees. This compares to recent gatherings, which have attracted over 40. In the 1917/18 season no AGM takes place. In 1943, '44 and '45 the few members present discuss whether the club ought to continue. Present in '43 are only five people.

Matches and Tournaments

It is a wonder with so many meetings (committee meetings, sub-committee meetings, extraordinary meetings, annual general meetings...) that any tennis is played at all at Harrow, but from the pages of the Harrow Gazette, it can be seen that the club is strong in its early days. In 1883, for instance, the strength and fame of the gentlemen's first pair, Mr Ruault and Major Tulloch, is such that Maida Vale brings to the annual fixture "four gentlemen who all had won public tournaments". In the 19th century, the club plays matches against among others Eastcote, Pinner, Northwood, Hampstead, Cumberland and in 1894 takes on the All England Club, losing narrowly by only six sets to four.

In the 1890s, the news of matches being cancelled owing to difficulties in mustering teams seems to outnumber the match reports. Nevertheless, matches continue albeit in an irregular fashion. In 1904 Mrs Paine organises mid-week games against local clubs (Eastcote and Pinner, the most frequent opposition) and the club, over the years, plays against dozens of clubs many thousands of matches. In 1953 Mr and Mrs Michell present a cup in their name to the winners of an american tournament. Mr and Mrs White in 1955 award a cup to the champion of the gentlemen's singles. These cups and the Ryan and Pettit cups are contested up to the 1980s. The club's newest cup is the Roger Frais Challenge Cup, awarded to the winners of a handicap tournament and named in honour of Mr Frais, who was president from 2000 to 2009.

Oftentimes Harrow has held club days and ladies' days on weekdays as well as weekends. In 1948 club days are Tuesdays (2.00pm) and Wednesdays (6.00pm). In 1955 ladies' day changes from a Wednesday to a Tuesday after

the committee observes: “Tennis clashes with Ducker⁸.” Open days have recently been held on Saturdays.

In no way implying that the club has weakened since its heyday, Carolyn Keen, in 1968, instigates a successful programme of coaching, and in 1970 Harrow joins the Middlesex League. As the club grows over the years it adds more and more teams. In 1997, four of its five teams gain promotion, and the club wins the Kenton Winter Mixed-doubles League. Subsequently, several more leagues are won and teams promoted. Indeed, arguably Harrow’s greatest sporting achievement occurs in 2014, when the ladies’ 1st team wins promotion to the Middlesex Tennis Summer League West Premier Division. (No higher division exists.) In the premier division, the ladies play teams such as the Queen’s Club ladies 1st team. At Harrow, the ladies are stronger than the gentlemen.

By 2020 Harrow has in the Middlesex League five ladies and five gentlemen’s teams as well as teams in other floodlit, ladies’ and mixed leagues.

Club Spirit

The first AGM (1898) endeavours “to put a little more life into the club”, and over the years, inventive members have lots of ideas on how best to do so. In 1900 Mrs Kenyon is asked to provide teas for those members living far from the courts. Taking place in the club’s first year and then again in 1929, a great success are two “subscription dances”. Dances then dwindle, stop, and restart in 1954. In 1965 members are offered tournaments, dances and bridge evenings. Sporadic advertising campaigns increase membership, campaigns like the one in 1969, when 1,500 leaflets are distributed on the Hill.

Harrow, a survivor, has endured much. The hardest time for the club has been the period including and between the two world wars. Difficult too has been the loss of the King’s Head lease, the search for new premises on Peterborough Hill, and the subsequent construction of a clubhouse and new courts. In these times, members have toiled to preserve the club. The later move to the Harrow School courts is a time of exertion and anxiety also.

Notable Members

The list of members to have given valuable service is long. The first president appears to have been J.T. Horley. The grass court, when it is dry, at his home in Roxborough Park is used for matches in the 1880s. When it is too wet to play on the grass, matches instead take place on the three cinder courts at West Acre.

⁸Ducker, now derelict, is the old Harrow School bathing place. It was open to the public in the early 20th century.

Stalwarts on early committees include Mr Stogdon, housemaster of West Acre, and long-serving secretary Dr Williams. Mrs Leaf, Tony Beresford, Steven Holloway and Bernard Simpson all hold office. Others include Dr Pennefather, treasurer in the first decade of the 20th century and later-times, president; H.J. Wasbrough, secretary in the 1920s; and G.F.S. Davis, who is instrumental in keeping alive the club during the second world war and who in 1944 is president, secretary and treasurer. Andrew Duncan and P.K. White hold many posts in the 1950s and '60s. And there are many more, but worthy of special recognition is Miss H.L. Eddis. Miss Eddis joins the club in 1904, becomes a committee member in 1919 and is president from '61 to '64. For 45 years, she is on the committee; for 69 years, she is a member of the club.

Even though the archives reference the members of committee more often than the players of tennis, several competitors are outstanding. Often referenced are Major Tulloch, the Messrs Ruault, Templer, Charles, Holmes and the Misses Ruault, Charles, Capper and Kinloch. Known to have played at Wimbledon also are members Mr and Mrs Bobby Michell (he is president in the '50s). Others are likely to have played at Wimbledon as well, particularly in both clubs' early days, but no record exists.

A gentleman who receives special recognition by Harrow LTC is Spencer Walter Gore⁹ (1850–1906). Honour is due him even though he was never a member of the club. (He was a pupil at Harrow School before it had tennis courts¹⁰) He deserves recognition because he is, in 1877, Wimbledon's first ever men's singles champion and an inscription¹¹ on one of the benches overlooking the Harrow courts honours him and his achievement.

Of Harrow's finest player, minutes of committee make surprisingly little fuss. Miss Blanche Bingley is surely Harrow's most remarkable and greatest player, for her successes have been many and outstanding. Miss Bingley is the club ladies' singles champion in 1885, the same year in which she is Wimbledon ladies' singles runner-up, having been defeated by a Miss M. Watson. Victories, however, are soon to follow. Mrs G.W. Hillyard née Bingley is subsequently six-time Wimbledon champion (1886, 1889, 1894,

⁹Not to be confused, Spencer Walter Gore had a son Spencer Frederick Gore (1878–1914), who also was educated at Harrow and later became the first president of the Camden Town Group of Post-Impressionist painters. His *Landscape* c.1908–9 (oil on canvas, 50.6 x 61 cm) hangs in Harrow School's Old Speech Room Gallery. He died from pneumonia aged only 36. His son Frederick Gore RA (1913–2009) was a distinguished painter also. [Acknowledgement: Carolyn Leder, curator, Harrow School Old Speech Room Gallery.]

¹⁰Harrow School had no tennis courts in the 1860s. It did have Eton fives, racquets and squash courts. An Etonian, E.M. Young, who came to Harrow as a master in 1863, introduced fives to Harrow. (Racquets is a modified version of fives, and squash is a modified version of racquets.) Today the school has nine fives courts.

¹¹In Honour of / SPENCER GORE / The first Wimbledon Men's Singles Champion, 19 July 1877 / Mr Bradby's House, 1863³–1869² / Kindly donated by Stephen Pollock-Hill, The Grove 1961³ (superscripts denote summer and autumn terms at Harrow).

1897, 1899 and 1900) and runner-up a further seven times. Observes the official history of the All England Club: “There have been greater players than Mrs Hillyard, but none with so stalwart a performance at Wimbledon.”

Chronology

1877: The Harrow Gazette includes advertisements for racquets, nets and poles for sale.

1880: The Gazette of July 17 references Harrow LTC. In the Gazette of September 18, F.S. Winkley (tailor, hosier and hatter) of High Street, Harrow, and W.L. Stevens (also, tailor, hosier and hatter) on the Hill advertise coats, caps, sashes and ribbons in club colours. Two subscription dances in the Public Halls are planned for December 27, 1880 and January 18, 1881.

1881: On January 18 “Inclement weather” causes two members of the gentlemen’s team to fail to turn up against Pinner. Harrow plays Stanmore in a friendly match. Representing the club are Major Tulloch, Messrs Ruault, Templer, Charles, Holmes and Misses Ruault, Charles, Capper and Kinloch. Other matches are played against Pinner, West Middlesex, Elstree and Maida Vale. Club finals take place on July 30 at “the club ground”, presumably the West Acre courts, and Mr Templer defeats Mr Ruault to become the club’s first recorded gentlemen’s singles champion.

1882: The first known fixture on J.T. Horley’s grass court is played at his home in Roxborough Park. When it is wet, matches instead take place on the “club cinder courts”. Fixtures with Nomads, Sunbury and Vandals are arranged. “Refreshments of a light character” are provided for the club finals.

1883: The fame of Mr Ruault and Major Tulloch, the Harrow Gentlemen’s first pair, is such that Maida Vale brings to the annual fixture “four gentlemen who all have won public tournaments”.

1884: Fixtures include Worcester Park, Hampstead and The Anonyms.

1885: Miss Blanche Bingley is club ladies’ champion and Wimbledon ladies’ runner-up. Miss Bingley wins Wimbledon in 1886 and again as Mrs Hillyard in 1889, 1894, 1897, 1899 and 1900. E.T. Maitland Jones takes over as secretary from J. Ruault. Mr Ruault had been secretary since the club’s foundation. Matches take place against the Middle Temple and Hyde Park clubs.

1886: A Fixture with Cambridge University Past and Present is arranged.

1888: The club plays a match on “the recreation ground”.

1889: The club is recorded as the Harrow Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, the first, and it seems the last, mention of croquet in the club’s official name.

1891: Club fixtures comprise three gentlemen’s matches, one ladies’ match and three mixed matches. Opponents include Stanmore, Burgess Hill and The Inner Temple.

1893: By May 20 the club has recorded four consecutive victories. The first recorded committee meeting takes place on March 4 at Mr Stogdon's house in West Acre. Present are Dr Williams (secretary) and Messrs Harvey, Horley (president) and Sandworth. The secretary asks permission to buy new wire netting to prevent balls escaping from the courts. Club competitions are played in one week in June, not from May to October, as had been the case.

1894: The club plays an All England team and loses by only six sets to four. Members propose a general meeting to air their complaints.

1895: The chairman calls attention to the poor state of the clubroom at West Acre. A new roller for the courts is acquired.

1896: The club agrees an annual tenancy at West Acre with the owner, Mr Stogdon.

1897: There is trouble with Harper, the groundsman, who is "not a great success, in many ways being incapable of performing the required duties".

1898: The first AGM is held in March. 11 members are present. They decide that a committee is to be elected and is to comprise a president, a secretary, a treasurer and nine other members, three of the 12 to retire each year. In 1898 annual subscriptions are one guinea for gentlemen, 15 shillings for ladies and three guineas for families. The committee decides in December to spread ashes on no. 1 court at a cost of £7.

1900: The committee fears that the club can continue only if the rent at West Acre is reduced to £15 a year. The owner, Mr Stogdon, agrees and crisis averted, the club continues.

1901: The AGM is held at the Public Halls in the High Street.

1902: The committee decides to rent "the whole cottage", at three shillings a week. The cottage, used for changing, is in the West Acre garden.

1904: No tournament is held, but three courts are in use. Nos. 1 and 3 courts are gravel (a precursor of modern shale); no. 2 court is cinder.

1905: Membership is limited to 75 players, and the limit, reached. The subscription for ladies is increased to one guinea to bring it into line with that of the gentlemen.

1906: The club plays Northwood Club and Cumberland Club.

1907: Mrs Kenyon arranges american tournaments (handicap tournaments on Tuesday afternoons).

1910: A new garden hose is bought, and benches repaired and repainted.

1914 to 1918: Little activity is recorded during the first world war. Eight members only attend the 1916 meeting, and there are no minutes of AGMs for 1917 and 1918. The 1915 AGM decrees that any member who resigns during the war may be re-admitted without an entrance fee. The committee comprises Mr J. Stogdon (president), Miss H.L. Eddis (secretary) and Miss Holme (treasurer). Annual subscriptions are one guinea for individuals and three guineas for families.

1919: Business resumes after the war. The committee, with G.F.S Davis

as secretary and H.L. Eddis as treasurer, is authorised to spend a sum not exceeding £100 on the maintenance and repair of the premises at West Acre.

1920: After the death of Mr Stogdon in 1919, Mr Davis tries to obtain for the club a five-year lease at West Acre. The widow of Mr Stogdon promises to consider the matter.

1923: The vetting system persists. A Miss Harries is refused membership.

1924: Resignations total 19—a heavy year. The secretary and the treasurer are requested to invest such a sum as they think fit into National Savings certificates.

1925: “The difficulty in raising teams, [an] absence of facilities, and [an] undesirability of occupying the courts on Saturdays” result in no matches being played.

1926: The termination of its tenancy at West Acre imminent, the club discusses the prospective new ground at the King’s Head. The aim of the AGM, in Roxeth Hall, is to procure two hard and two grass courts at a rent of £75 a year. The club moves to the King’s Head.

1927: The AGM decides that the two grass courts be made into hard courts. The committee rules to debar any Harrow schoolboy from playing during term.

1928: The annual subscription for individual members is £2–10s.

1929: 25 new members are elected. They include Ove Arup.

1936: A lack of interest means that gentlemen’s and ladies’ matches are dropped. En Tout Cas conducts work on the King’s Head courts.

1937: An objection to Sunday-morning matches is overruled.

1938: The club admits fellows of Oxford and Cambridge. The fellows must pay visitors’ fees. To water the courts the club considers the British Overhead Irrigation Co. Ltd.

1940: The AGM adopts “Rule 13: During the continuance of the war, persons temporarily resident in Harrow may become temporary members.”

1941: Three hundredweight of caustic soda is bought to eliminate moss on the courts. Members start voluntary work on Saturday, March 2.

1943: G.F.S. Davis, the chairman, and only four others attend the AGM. They discuss the club’s future—as they do again in 1944 and 1945—and decide to continue. They co-opt a master from Malvern College onto the committee. Malvern shares Harrow School premises during the second world war.

1944: The AGM decides to double subsequent subscriptions for members who fail to pay their subscriptions by February 1. G.F.S. Davis is president, secretary and treasurer.

1945: After discussion at the AGM, it is decided that the club shall continue.

1948: Club days are Tuesdays (2.00pm) and Wednesdays (6.00pm). There are two gentlemen’s, two ladies’ and two mixed matches. Fixtures include Northwood and Hatch End.

1950: After 40 years' service, Dr Pennefather is elected an honorary member. He has been many times secretary and treasurer.

1952: Famous people at the AGM include Andrew Duncan, Tony Beresford and John Leaf.

1953: Mr and Mrs Michell present a challenge-cup trophy to the winners of an american tournament. The club discusses its tenancy. The aim is to extend the lease to either seven or fourteen years at a rent not to exceed £100.

1955: Mr and Mrs White present a challenge-cup trophy to the winner of the gentlemen's singles competition. Ladies' day (a Wednesday) "coincides with Ducker". It is changed to a Tuesday. Matches are played against Old Harrovians, Pinner, and Northwood.

1956: In July members complain that the hut at the King's Head is in "a disgusting state".

1957: Two long-serving members are elected to honorary membership: Mr White and Mr Wasbrough.

1958: Miss Alison Walker undertakes the duties of juniors' captain. The watering system is overhauled at a cost of £90. The groundsman complains bitterly in writing that the adjoining nursery's cultivator is throwing stones over the bank by the courts. The committee discusses the plan of the King's Head to redevelop the courts and the adjacent nursery garden.

1959: The committee considers Bowden House, Orley Farm School, the British European Airways courts in Shaftesbury Avenue, Harrow Cricket Club and the home in South Hill Avenue of Mrs Leaf as it debates whether to buy the freehold on the King's Head site or to move elsewhere on the Hill. The pond by court no. 1 is "full and malodorous".

1961: Mr Michell, president, and Dr James, headmaster of Harrow School, negotiate the proposed construction of three courts at the bottom of Peterborough Hill. The estimated cost of red all-weather courts is £1,759. In February, the King's Head pays the club £1,500 compensation. The club determines to carry on, even if it must do so in a dormant state.

1962: In August a 21-year lease between club and school is agreed at £25 a year. Messrs Keen, Miller, Ryan and Duncan are appointed trustees to hold the lease. Betty Siddons offers £1,000 towards the cost of a clubhouse and new courts on Peterborough Hill. Without this gift, it is probable that the club would have disbanded. In playing terms, the club is dormant.

1963: There is much work and some delay in constructing the clubhouse and three courts.

1964: Work parties help with construction. Play begins.

1965: Bridge evenings in the clubhouse are introduced.

1967: The club comprises 78 adults, 36 juniors, ten non-playing members, six students and six honorary members—in total, 136 members.

1968: The committee determines to increase membership by displaying posters in libraries and writing to local independent schools. The only match

is against Harrow masters and their wives. Carolyn Keen instigates a successful programme of coaching.

1969: To increase membership, the club distributes 1,500 leaflets to the Hill and to local independent schools. A sub-committee forms to arrange inter-club matches.

1970: Harrow joins the Middlesex League. The gentlemen finish sixth in division 5, and the ladies, seventh in division 3. The club participates for the first time in the ballot for Wimbledon tickets.

1973: Treasurer Steven Holloway, who reports in absentia, informs the AGM that for the previous year, income had been down.

1974: The AGM announces the death of Miss Eddis. Miss Eddis had joined the club in 1904, had become a committee member in 1919 and had been president from 1961 to 1964. For 45 years, she had been on the committee; for 69 years, she had been a member of the club. Harrow officials are Michael Wheeler (president), Tony Beresford (vice-president), Bernard Simpson (secretary) and Steven Holloway (treasurer).

1976: Coaching films are a success. Members compete for three cups: the Michell, the White and the Ryan and do so until the 1980s.

1977: The club advertises itself. It boasts gentlemen's and ladies' teams, social tournaments, three all-weather courts, and a children's sand pit and swing.

1978: The club discusses its difficult financial position and the expiry of the Peterborough Hill lease. The club resolves to find other premises on the Hill, preferably in Harrow School grounds.

1979: Vandals burn-down the clubhouse. Its loss exacerbates the problems of small membership and inadequate funds.

1980: On June 21 the club celebrates its centenary with a party at the home of Jean Keen. Club and school negotiate use of the school courts and the Boyer Webb Pavilion. Hugh Lumb is the club coach.

1981: Club and school agree a lease for the use of the school courts at £1,000 a year or £15 a member, whichever is the greater.

1984: The club worries over the state of the school courts.

1985: Annual subscriptions are £16.50 for full members, £33 for families and £5.50 for juniors.

1986: The courts are resurfaced. The club considers introducing bar facilities at the Boyer Webb Pavilion.

1989: The club has 80 gentlemen, 80 ladies and 45 juniors.

1991: An annual club dinner is introduced (or possibly reintroduced). This year it is at La Giralda in Pinner.

1992: Pete Rutland takes over as coach from Fraser Wilson. The gentlemen's team is in division 7 and the ladies' team is in division 2 of the Middlesex N.W. League.

1994: The club enters two gentlemen's and two ladies' teams in the Middlesex N.W. League.

1995: A club logo is designed; branded clothing is introduced. The ladies' 1st team wins the Kenton Winter Floodlit League.

1996: The first quiz night is held. It is at Orley Farm School; the question-master is Roger Fraiss.

1997: Four of the five teams in the Middlesex N.W. League gain promotion. The committee organizes more social events than ever. They include tournaments, dinners, quiz nights and president's pimm's.

1998: Club and school negotiate the lease in the light of school plans to expand the sports facilities.

1999: Paul Hopkins replaces Pete Rutland as coach. Winter matches burgeon: nine teams contest more than 40 matches.

2000: To celebrate the millennium, the club plants a tree (a Sweet Chestnut) and produces a photographic record of the year. The committee comprises Alastair Lack (president), Roger Fraiss (vice-president), Patti Axten (secretary), Peter Detre (treasurer) and Carole Bellringer (chairwoman). The club builds a website¹².

2001: Alastair Lack awards a cup in his name to Christopher Walker, the first winner of the juniors' tournament. Cliff Gray takes over as coach from Paul Hopkins.

2003: On April 28, the London Borough of Harrow grants Harrow School planning permission for the redevelopment of its sports complex, the tennis courts included. (The date of application for planning permission is uncertain.) TC Blau-Weiß Kassel e.V. visits Harrow LTC. The event (July 24-27) is inspired by club member John Glass, who has ties with the German town of Kassel. The two clubs enjoy each other's competition and friendship and alternate visits in following years. The ladies' doubles cup has little room left to engrave new names; the club buys a new one.

2004: The committee determines that for summer fixtures ladies will provide homemade sandwiches and cakes; gentlemen may have pizza delivered. Harrow visits Blau-Weiß between July 15 and 18. Work starts on the new courts; the club plays on temporary Astroturf™ courts between March and October. It plays its league matches away from home. On October 2 the club celebrates the inauguration of 12 new acrylic courts with an exhibition match by club coaches.

2005: The club abandons its tennis whites rule in order to attract up-and-coming players but decrees: "Recognizable tennis wear should be worn . . . no beachwear." To celebrate the club's 125th anniversary, Teresa and Graham Dunbar hold the club Christmas party at school boarding-house Bradbys.

2006: The ladies' singles, the gentlemen's singles and the gentlemen's doubles cups are all re-silvered.

2007: Umpire's chairs are acquired. Membership exceeds 400, and a waiting list introduced. Pete Rutland returns to coach the club. The gentlemen's

¹²<https://hltc.net/>

team wins the Middlesex Cup for the first and only time, and the ladies' 1st team (Vivien Mrowiec, captain) wins promotion to the Middlesex League West Intermediate Division.

2008: An extraordinary committee convenes to investigate allegations of gamesmanship.

2009: Complaints about birdbath puddles on the courts prompt the committee to buy WaterHOGs™.

2010: The WaterHOGs™ are re-sponged after birds peck at them for nesting material.

2011: Elaina Forland begins coaching the juniors.

2012: London 2012¹³ inspires the club to hold an Olympic open day (July 22). H.M. Revenue and Customs grants Harrow CASC status. Its newfound pseudo-charitable standing entitles the club to recover the VAT on its rent.

2013: Jesse Coulson, the school sports director from 2008 to 2017, presses the club to cut its playing time by 30 minutes on Saturdays. He proposes that instead of two o'clock, play cease at half past one. (The club has use of the courts on Saturday mornings; the school has the courts in the afternoons.) Playing time is not shortened.

2014: Mr [???] Jamieson donates to the club several Mappin & Webb silver teaspoons that he believes his cousin May Loudon won when she lived in the borough and played for Harrow in the early 20th century. The ladies' 1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th teams win promotion. (The 2nd team stays put in division 1.) For the first time in Harrow's history, the ladies' 1st team (Wendy Driver, captain) wins promotion to the Middlesex Tennis Summer League West Premier Division. Tennis ball recycling commences; players' old tennis balls no longer end up in landfill, and the club claims ten pence a ball from Recycaball, a not-for-profit organisation.

2015: The club abolishes its joining fee to bring Harrow into line with neighbouring clubs. A rules change means that to qualify for county membership, members need only live ten miles from the club, not 30 as had been the case. As county members pay a reduced subscription, the committee hopes to attract talented players from further afield.

2016: The gentlemen's 1st team, captained by Mick Hooker, wins promotion to the Middlesex Tennis Summer League West Intermediate Division. (The only higher division is the premier division.)

2017: Harrow School Enterprises Ltd (the commercial trading arm of the school) alters the way it calculates its fees and raises the club's rent for the year to £11,787—an increase of ten and three-quarters per cent over that of the previous year. Harrow School fails in its attempt to divert a public footpath that crosses the tennis courts. Consequently, legal orders have

¹³The 2012 Summer Olympic Torch Relay begins at Land's End on May 19, 2012 and ends 70 days later on July 27 at the opening ceremony in the Olympic Stadium. The relay passes over Harrow-on-the-Hill and close to Harrow LTC on day 68.

necessitated the partial demolition of the courts' boundary fence to return to walkers their long-established right of way. A ruling against the school came on April 20 after a public enquiry held over six days earlier in the year at the Harrow Civic Centre. Planning Inspector Alison Lea, who acted on behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, headed the enquiry. Her decision was comprehensive and damning. In it, she detailed how before starting work on its new sports complex in 2003, the school had neglected to apply for diversion orders for two public footpaths (nos. 57 and 58). The path that had especially affected—and still affects—the club is path no. 57, which leads from Football Lane to Pebworth Road, for it is on this path sit six of the tennis courts. The inspector explained how on July 3, 2013 the school had applied belatedly for a diversion order for footpath no. 57 but that errors in the application for the diversion of the second path meant neither order was properly submitted until April 7, 2016. By which time, the school's behaviour had enraged local walkers and alarmed the club. The school had locked and barricaded gates and had threatened on either side of footpath no. 57 to erect a narrow two-metre tall fence through six of the courts. (Never mind that, as inspector Lea observed, the school was contractually obliged to provide the club with not six but 12 tennis courts.) The inspector's decision rested on whether the orders had met the requirements laid out in s. 119 of the Highways Act 1980, c. 66, specifically that in confirming the orders public enjoyment be undiminished. Objectors including Gareth Thomas, the Member of Parliament for Harrow West; councillors for Harrow and for Brent; representatives of the Ramblers' Association and of the Open Spaces Society and local walkers had testified that the orders would have greatly diminished their enjoyment. Inspector Lea concurred and confirmed no orders. The inquiry's affect on the club, instead of simply being objectionable, could easily have been brutal. Had inspector Lea found the school "wilful" in its failure to seek orders before starting building work, she, with the force of the Secretary of State behind her, could have ordered not the demolition only of some fencing but the demolition of the tennis courts in their entirety, so conceivably forcing the club to disband. It was the conviction of some objectors that once it had obtained planning permission, the school had purposefully mislaid its application. They believed that with a better timeline against which to judge the school's intentions the inspector might have ruled more harshly than she did. As it was, with dates uncertain, no evidence existed that the school had acted wilfully.

2018: Membership Secretary Sue Forder ensures the club's compliance with the GDPR¹⁴ (EU) 2016/679. Scheduled for demolition under plans to rebuild several school properties, the Boyer Webb Pavilion is extended a re-

¹⁴The General Data Protection Regulation is a legal framework that sets requirements for the collecting and processing of personal information from persons who live in the EU.

prieve as Mayor of London Sadiq Khan denies a Harrow School request for planning permission. In a decision dated January 29, the reason given is “inappropriate development on metropolitan open land”.

2019: The inaugural Roger Fraiss Challenge Cup is held on September 1.