

# GREENWICH TENNIS CLUB

## A Brief History

Prior to the formation of the Greenwich Tennis Club the site known as Leemon Reserve was occupied by Greenwich Public School and the Head Masters house. The school occupied the site from 1887 to 1909 when it was transferred to Greenwich Road. John Leemon the longest serving head teacher commenced service on the Greenwich Point site in 1895, transferring the school to its new site in Greenwich Road in 1909 and remaining head teacher until his retirement in 1929.



## GREENWICH POINT PUBLIC SCHOOL

The earliest evidence of a tennis court on the Leemon Reserve is from an aerial photograph taken in 1943 which shows one court and the Head Masters House . The house was demolished in 1967.



### **Aerial Photograph of Tennis Court**

The court shown in the aerial photograph was an Ant Bed type and remained so until a quotation was received in October 1966 for two loam courts with plastic lines for a cost of \$500- per court. At that time the agreed parcel of land for the Greenwich Tennis Club at the corner of Mitchell Street and Wallace Street was 143 feet by 136 feet.

The two loam courts were duly laid but by the end of 1967 local residents complained of red dust entering their homes and settling on furniture and floors. In addition to losing the loam surface in high winds the problem was exacerbated by water run-off in wet weather. So in March 1968 a quotation was received for resurfacing the two courts with a 7% to 9% red oxide stabilised loam, a water sprinkler system, brick catchment wall and a safety fence for a cost of \$2603. The GTC was requested to contribute \$1000 to the cost of resurfacing. The stabilised loam courts continued to be used until December 1987, although complaints regarding dust re-emerged again in 1978.

A request by the club for a brick practice wall and brick barbecue was made in October 1971 for an estimated cost of \$1400. At this time the land was owned by the Department of Education. The practice wall and barbecue were eventually built and in operation by 1976.



In the late 1980s it was obvious to those members playing interclub matches that other clubs were changing their court surfaces from loam to artificial grass and so it was proposed that Greenwich investigate the requirements and cost to convert to "mod grass". To the amazement of the club committee a substantial number of members wanted to retain the loam courts and were most vocal in their opposition to any change in playing surface. Most of the members did not realise how difficult it had become in obtaining good quality loam and the hard work required in maintaining a consistently good playing surface. Eventually, sanity prevailed and by early 1988 both surfaces were converted to artificial grass.

A specification for the GTC club house was prepared in May 1966 and a quotation for \$3771 was accepted by Lane Cove Council although the final cost was \$4009 due to problems connecting the electricity supply. By June 1967 the club house was complete except for some carpentry work, painting and electrics.



**CLUB HOUSE - MAY1976**

In the original build the entrance to the club house was directly opposite the entrance door to Court Number 1. In 1980 two members (Barry Sagar and Peter Wallis) who were local builders came up with the idea of an extension to the club house in the form of a pergola structure. At the same time the original entrance door to the club house was closed off and the current double doors were installed. Some five years ago the original pergola structure was rebuilt and a solid roof added to replace the original hessian covering.

In March 1966 the Lane Cove Council suggested that the Greenwich Point Tennis Club, as it was known at that time, provide a constitution for the club. Mr John Kennedy agreed to do this. By March 1967 a draft agreement between Lane Cove Council and the GTC was promulgated where the club would pay a \$300- annual rent as well as Fire Insurance and All Risk Insurance on the premises.

The trustees of GTC at that time were John Kennedy, Robert Powell and Judith Bell. By 1974 the trustees were Barry Sagar, Arthur Harrison and Brian Harvey. The earliest recorded president of the club was D. Wilson in 1969, although no doubt there were others prior to 1969. By 1973 the club committee consisted of a President, Secretary, Treasurer and six or seven committee members with one member designated competition secretary and another member responsible for court hire and collection of fees. A list of presidents from 1968 to 2016 is given in the attached Appendix 1.

The club membership in October 1967 was 85. The breakdown of membership figures in March 1968 was 53 adults and 30 juniors. Over the following 49 years the membership climbed to over 300. In 1973 the joining fee was \$20 and the annual subscription was \$10.

During the summer of 1973/74 the club entered for the first time a mixed doubles team in the Northern Suburbs Tennis Association (NTSA) competition. Within a couple years the club had two mixed doubles teams and two men's doubles teams in the Saturday afternoon competition and one men's team in the Sunday morning competition. The teams played in divisions A9 to A6. Sadly in the early 2000s interest in devoting a full afternoon to tennis dwindled and those members wishing to play a full afternoons tennis left to play with other clubs.



### **GREENWICH MENS TEAM NOVEMBER 1981**

To maintain a high playing standard for the NSTA competition during the 1970s and 1980s the playing standard was set fairly high for prospective new members and it was not unusual for some applicants to be rejected, sometimes more than once, with the result that one or two committee members developed somewhat of a reputation in Greenwich.

As a result of the declining interest in the NSTA Saturday competition an internal handicap competition was devised by Bill Oliver, comprising two divisions, one high handicap the other low handicap. Bill Oliver has successfully run the competition since 2006.

*Tennis adds years to your life*

*And life to your tennis*

The club championships were first started in 1978 but the winners of the various events were not recognised until the Honours Board was erected for the 1980/81 season. Participation numbers were higher in those earlier years despite a smaller membership. As there were no handicap events first round losers in the men's events would automatically be entered into the Plate event.



GREENWICH TENNIS CLUB CLUB CHAMPIONS						
MENS			LADIES			
YEAR	SINGLES	DOUBLES	SINGLES	DOUBLES		
1980-1	J. MARTIN	B. SAGAR F. SIMPSON	T. SAGAR	B. POTTER J. BRAUER		
1981-2	R. HOWARD	R. HOWARD I. HOWARD		T. SAGAR J. SMYTH		
1982-3	R. HOWARD	R. HOWARD S. SPENCER		N. MORRIS B. BERNERIUS		
1983-4	I. HOWARD	I. HOWARD R. HOWARD	T. SAGAR			
1984-5	R. HOWARD	M. PORTER K. TAYLOR	B. OLIVER	B. OLIVER P. WILTON		
1985-6	R. HOWARD	M. PORTER K. TAYLOR	event not played	T. SAGAR H. McLEAN		
1986-7	R. HOWARD	R. GALLAGHER F. SIMPSON	T. SAGAR	T. SAGAR H. McLEAN		
1987-8	R. GALLAGHER	R. GALLAGHER F. SIMPSON	H. McLEAN	Y. GALLAGHER T. GALLAGHER		
1988-9	J. WILLIAMSON	M. PORTER J. WILLIAMSON	B. OLIVER	B. POWELL M. WILSON		
1989-90	J. WILLIAMSON	M. PORTER J. WILLIAMSON	event not played	T. SAGAR B. OLIVER		
1990-91	J. WILLIAMSON	M. PORTER J. WILLIAMSON	T. GALLAGHER	Y. GALLAGHER T. GALLAGHER		
1991-92	M. PORTER	M. PORTER J. WILLIAMSON	event not played	T. SAGAR B. OLIVER		
1992-93	J. WILLIAMSON	M. PORTER J. WILLIAMSON	B. OLIVER	event not played		
1993-94	J. WILLIAMSON	M. PORTER J. WILLIAMSON	B. OLIVER	B. OLIVER H. HILL		
1994-95	J. WILLIAMSON	M. PORTER J. WILLIAMSON	B. OLIVER	B. OLIVER H. HILL		
1995-96	J. WILLIAMSON	M. PORTER J. WILLIAMSON	B. OLIVER	C. NICHOLSON G. THACKER		
1996-97	J. WILLIAMSON	M. PORTER J. WILLIAMSON	C. LUSHER	C. NICHOLSON G. THACKER		
1997-98	B. GEARY	B. GEARY L. WELSH	J. CUNNINGHAM	C. NICHOLSON G. THACKER		
1998-99	B. GEARY	B. GEARY L. WELSH	J. CUNNINGHAM	C. NICHOLSON C. LUSHER		
1999-00	S. BURLEY	B. GEARY L. WELSH	C. NICHOLSON	C. NICHOLSON G. THACKER		
2001-02	S. GREEN	R. & T. BROOKMAN	C. NICHOLSON	C. NICHOLSON G. THACKER		
2002-03	S. BURLEY	R. & T. BROOKMAN	C. NICHOLSON	C. NICHOLSON G. THACKER		
2003-04	S. BURLEY	S. GREEN & M. ARMATI	C. NICHOLSON	C. NICHOLSON G. THACKER		
2004	B. GEARY	B. GEARY & L. WELSH	C. NICHOLSON	C. NICHOLSON G. THACKER		
2005	T. CARTWRIGHT	B. GEARY & L. WELSH	G. THACKER	C. NICHOLSON G. THACKER		
2006	T. CARTWRIGHT	B. GEARY & P. SALTER	T. KENNEDY	C. NICHOLSON G. THACKER		
2007	A. BENNETT	T. CARTWRIGHT & D. KARP	T. KENNEDY	J. CUNNINGHAM & T. KENNEDY		
2008	T. CARTWRIGHT	T. CARTWRIGHT & D. KARP	T. KENNEDY	J. CUNNINGHAM & T. KENNEDY		
2009	A. BENNETT	M. ARMATI & A. BENNETT	G. THACKER	C. NICHOLSON & G. THACKER		
2010	A. BENNETT	M. ARMATI & A. BENNETT	J. GIBSON	K. WAKELIN & J. GIBSON		
2011	A. BENNETT	T. CARTWRIGHT & M. CAMERON	T. KENNEDY	T. KENNEDY & J. CUNNINGHAM		
2012	A. BENNETT	M. ARMATI & A. BENNETT	T. KENNEDY	T. KENNEDY & J. CUNNINGHAM		
2013	A. BENNETT	A. BENNETT & M. ARMATI	J. GIBSON	J. GIBSON & G. THACKER		
2014	A. BENNETT	P. McILWAINE & T. THACKER	NOT PLAYED	G. THACKER & T. KENNEDY		
2015	A. BENNETT	P. McILWAINE & T. THACKER	NOT PLAYED	G. THACKER & T. KENNEDY		
2016	A. BENNETT	P. McILWAINE & T. THACKER	NOT PLAYED	G. THACKER & J. FORD		
					MIXED DOUBLES	
					K. TAYLOR H. McLEAN	
					R. GALLAGHER Y. GALLAGHER	
					R. GALLAGHER Y. GALLAGHER	
					M. PORTER J. PORTER	
					B. SAGAR T. SAGAR	
					M. & C. PORTER	
					L. WELSH E. DAVIES	
					C. & M. PORTER	
					C. & M. PORTER	
					T. & R. GALLAGHER	
					L. WELSH J. CUNNINGHAM	
					B. GEARY C. LUSHER	
					B. GEARY C. LUSHER	
					A. & S. BURLEY	
					A. & S. BURLEY	
					B. GEARY G. THACKER	
					A. & S. BURLEY	
					J. CUNNINGHAM & T. CARTWRIGHT	
					J. CUNNINGHAM & T. CARTWRIGHT	
					J. CUNNINGHAM & T. CARTWRIGHT	

Club Championship Honours Board

Early winners of the club championship mixed doubles event were Keith Taylor and Helen McLean. Keith, a past president and life member, continues to play social tennis on Sunday mornings. Other club champions of the era were Barry Sagar and Frank Simpson, both life members whose playing days at GTC go back to 1968 and 1973.



**KEITH and HELEN**

In addition to the NSTA Saturday afternoon competition other inter-club matches were played, Hallem Road Tennis Club and the Sydney Veterans being regular events. However, one of the biggest events of the year was the Calcutta Cup which was a very popular social and tennis occasion.

The idea came from "Calcutta Sweepstakes" held on high profile horse races such as the Melbourne Cup, usually by a club or charity. Not the usual sweep, but run by the club selling hundreds and even thousands of tickets: then the draw takes place, the person drawing the horse becomes the temporary holder. An auction is conducted to determine the final holder, the highest bidder for that horse. Half the amount goes to the person who drew the horse, the other half going to the final pool of money, together with the amount paid for the tickets. When the race has been won, prizes are distributed in the usual way for sweeps, but the club or charity normally retains 10% of the pool.

In the early tournaments there were twenty entrants, 10 women and 10 men. Each was given a handicap, 0 for the best player/s up to 16 for others. All club members were invited to attend on the Saturday evening before the tournament was played on the Sunday. Tickets were sold in the sweep. During the dinner the sweep was drawn to decide the temporary holders of the players follow by an auction of the players: the successful bidder becoming the holder of that player. After the auction a draw

was made for partners. The partners' handicaps were added together. The pairs were divided up into two groups of 5 in the order drawn. 5 pairs to play each of the others on court 1 and the other group on court 2, a set of 8 games. The winning pair on each court (decided by games won plus handicap) played a final set of 8 games to decide the first and second pair. The holder of the first pair received 40% of the total amount bid at the auction; the holder of the second pair got 10%.

Variations were introduced over time. For example winning players were given a prize out of the pool. The continuing handicap system was used instead of allocating handicaps. The auction was held at a barbecue at the tennis club on the Saturday evening.

After the auctions became dominated by a few syndicates of members, buying large packets of tickets and bidding high amounts for players, most other members lost interest. So, different methods were tried to enable all members to have a chance at "buying" a player. Members were restricted to the number of tickets each could buy. When this did not work, it was ruled that each member could be the final holder of only one player. But the big gamblers found ways round that and still dominated the auction. Again most members lost interest, except those who wished to play in the tournament. Even then the interest dwindled and no more of this were held.

Some Mini-Calcuttas which were for players only were run but members lost interest in these too and none have been proposed for some years.

Early in the 1980s the committee received complaints from members concerned that the courts were being used by players who were not members of Greenwich Tennis Club, although when challenged some of the interlopers tried give the impression they were members. To combat the problem the committee at that time organised an identification tag which each member fixed to their tennis shoe. The identification tag shown below would suggest there were at least 121 members at the time of issue.





### **Members Identification Tag**

The Arthur Harrison Trophy was initiated by a past secretary of GTC, Arthur Harrison, who lived opposite the club at 1 Mitchell Street. The original concept of the annual award was to acknowledge the most improved player during the preceding twelve months. Over time the emphasis of the award changed to give recognition to a club member who had made a significant contribution to the running of GTC. A list of winners of the trophy up to 2016 is given in the attached Appendix 2.

Ladies Mid-week tennis at GTC for all young tennis loving Greenwich mothers with young children was centred around Tuesdays in the early 70s and 80s. They would arrive for a social game and set up their crèche with playpens, summer wading pools and a plethora of play equipment. There would be at least ten mothers with their children and there would always be enough “minders” off court to supervise the crèche while others enjoyed a good game. This supervision included rescuing adventurous two/three year old climbers who would try to scale the wire fencing to get to their mothers playing on court. These social days meant the children had great interaction together before school and cemented many everlasting friendships both with the children and adults.

Once the children started school many of the mothers joined the “Mid-week Northern Suburbs Ladies Comp” Greenwich teams some of which are still going strong. In those days there were four (4) GTC teams competing in up to 45 divisions with 6 to 8 teams in each division. Each team had six player which included reserves. Over 2000 women competed in the massive Wednesday competition all over the North Shore. It was an enjoyable day with the host team providing lunch/afternoon tea. Many a cake/slice receipe was exchanged at those gatherings. With the change to

working mums the number of teams has diminished dramatically but the competition still continues.

The tennis venue was also used to have the most memorable bonfire on cracker night which was held on the Queen's Birthday weekend. This bonfire was added to by the whole tennis community and residents for weeks beforehand and hundreds of residents gathered to enjoy the event. BBQ dinners were organised and the community would set up picnic tables and supervise the kids at this fantastic annual event until the total banning of fireworks

*What a polite game tennis is. The chief word seems to be 'sorry' and admiration of each other's play crosses the net as frequently as the ball*



## **APPENDIX 1**

### **LIST OF CLUB PRESIDENTS**

1967 to 1968	Don Wilson
1969 to 1980	Barry Sagar
1981 to 1982	Ed Morris
1983 to 1984	Geoff Gibson
1985 to 1986	Alan Blake
1987 to 1988	Rod Gallagher
1989 to 1990	Michael Porter
1991 to 1992	Alan Jones
1993 to 1994	Keith Taylor
1995 to 1996	Jon Pratten
1997 to 1999	Alan Jones
2000 to 2010	Keith Taylor
2011 to 2014	Michael Armati
2015 to 2017	Peter Walton

## **APPENDIX 2**

## LIST OF ARTHUR HARRISON TROPHY WINNERS

1980	Ian Howard	2007	Michael Armati
1981	Martin Richardson	2008	Janice Gibson
1982	Rick Howard	2009	Mark Faigen
1983	Frank Zamrl	2010	Derek White
1984	Geoff Gibson	2011	Frank Simpson
1985	Pauline Gibson	2012	Adriane Kadweavek
1986	Barry Sagar	2013	Judy McMahon
1987	Nan Morris	2014	Derek White
1988	Rod Gallagher	2015	Mark Faigen
1989	Alan Jones	2016	Caroline Elliott
1991	Tracy Gallagher		
1994	Jon Pratten		
1995	Anthony Blake		
1997	Judy McMahon		
1998	Keith Taylor		
1999	Kathy Nicholson		
2000	Frank Simpson		
2001	Alan Jones		
2002	Judy McMahon		
2003	Don Powell		
2004	Bill Oliver		
2005	Jane Marquard & Dennis Karp		
2006	Peter Walton		