

GTTA HISTORY

This is the original GTTA History which will be continually updated for viewing on the Associations Website.

Should you spot any errors of any sort please contact me for rectification?

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Thanks x

Dedicated to:

***Anna my Wife and my Whole Life for so
Many Years-With Deepest Love!***

Allan-Photographer Supreme!

Terry-A Life Cut Short!

Kim and Kerry-My Team Mates!

You All!

Guildford Table Tennis Association A Celebration of Seventy-Five Years

By Ted Simpkin and John Diggins

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX

This features a range of interesting information from the ‘Simpkin History’ as well as updated tables showing winners of the tournaments and various competitions, and awarded Honours. Also included are details, in tabular form, of the Officials who have served the Association over the years

FOREWORD- By Alex Murdoch

Chairman of the ETTA

Many congratulations, on behalf of the English Table Tennis Association and the Table Tennis fraternity, on reaching 75 years of providing competitive Table Tennis and support for our great sport in the Guildford area, an outstanding achievement.

During the last 75 years not only has our sport changed significantly but also our way of life and the environment in which we live.

I personally started playing at 14 in a youth club, and my Competitive League play commenced as an apprentice via a Company Sports and Social Club in the Sixth Division of the Newbury League, not sure if I have improved much since those days just got slower, but hopefully a bit wiser.

Many people give different reasons for the decline in the League Structure over the last 30 years, it is, though, interesting to note that the youth club I started playing in, and the venues provided by Companies have virtually disappeared. Our sport was, for example, very strong in the Major Cities across England through Insurance and Banks Leagues; these virtually disappeared during the IRA Bombing Campaign, when the facilities for these Leagues closed.

What about the future? The decline in league affiliations has slowed down significantly, our sports participation in schools is increasing with nearly 10% of all 11 to 15 year olds playing regularly and the “need” for physical exercise is increasing, I see a bright future for our sport over the next 75 years!

If you look at the affiliations in, for example, France (180,000) and Germany (800,000) we have a long way to go from our present levels of (60,000).

In the 70's England had participation numbers higher than France, but the investments made in facilities by local and regional government changed the way sport was played in France. In England

this never happened, but with many new facilities projects having been put in place with investments of over £50M, and more to come, added with the change in strategy at Schools for competition again, and the government's investments in school sports facilities over the next 10 years will benefit our sport.

What about the changes in our sport from a playing perspective; the bats and rubbers are much different, the size of the ball has changed, we score differently, the serving rule has been amended a number of times (not sure if some of those I play realise this), we had no Glue, then Glue and now no Glue and the technology/innovation of blades and rubbers has impacted our sport.

We have perhaps had too many changes, a subject that we could debate for the next 75 years, the facts are that this has happened and the days of bats without any rubber and wearing long trousers and rallies of 15 minutes are behind us (except perhaps when I play Jim Felstead)

Irrespective of all of these changes the most important point is that we can go out and play our sport in local leagues once or twice a week, with friends we have made, in a competitive environment, have some physical and mental exercise and enjoyment.

It is Leagues like Guildford who have provided this through your hard working and dedicated volunteers and may it continue for at least another 75 years.

Some of you may not be aware that, although the Hon. Chairman of the ETTA, I am also a volunteer on Local League and County Committees, and play in three local leagues. Having had a really bad season so far, I blame the change in the rubber I could use!

All the best and have a great celebration on 20th March 2010, which I shall be attending.

Regards

Alex Murdoch

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PREAMBLE

“The Moving Finger writes; and having writ,

Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit

Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,

Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it”

OMAR KHYYAM (1053-1123)

This history will cover the last seventy-five years, and is a combination of Ted Simpkins excellent history, 1934 to 1982, and my own, which covers the period 1982 to 2009. There will be, by the very nature of the beast, some overlap. I have taken some liberties with the Simpkin contribution, making some adjustments, adding a few more photographs and information, a bit of general tweaking where necessary -modern technology, and Graham Watts, has allowed me to do this.

Personally I take some pride in learning word processing at the age of 71 years, to enable me to take on this task. It was Trevor Free, who in July 07 persuaded me to embark on this project, so, without any facilities, equipment, or computer skills at all, I agreed, and have thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience –the spin offs that have ensued, for me, have been truly amazing!

It is intended to outline the input of the major personalities and clubs, as well as Individuals, of the Guildford game over the last 75 years-to put their contributions into perspective. The

other aspect, of course, is to commentate upon the week by week happenings in our Association and our Membership.

A comparative newcomer to Guildford in 1961, fresh from National Service- the REME enjoyed my company during this period- I took up a lecturing post at Guildford Tech in Mechanical Engineering. Virtually the first thing I did was to join Cow and Gate in the First Division, and to get a game of football with the YMCA. Those were the days when you actually played sport, rather than watch it on the box, or doing your thing on a computer.

Table Tennis has provided me with so many happy times over the last five decades, both socially and sportingly. I have met many nice people and made a host of friends during this period. My biggest thrill since I arrived in Guildford was to be made a Vice President of the Association in May 2002 and to be presented with the 'John Oakley' award, for my contribution to Association affairs over the years. In 2010 I celebrate my fiftieth year with you.

The game of Table Tennis has evolved tremendously over 75 years, from playing in elegant grey flannels with Johnny Leach and Victor Barna pimpled bats, to the modern game we now enjoy. The Guildford Premier Division is one of the strongest in the country, and typifies the modern game, with players achieving speed, spin and athleticism only dreamt of by our fore runners.

As an aside, I must admit to being Colchester Junior Champion in 1953-the finals being played in front of an audience of 300. I was the first player to don shorts in the Colchester League - albeit football shorts- in the two Divisions that we had at that time-others soon followed!

I remember, in the Colchester league, our team, Paxmans –the Company where I served my apprenticeship-being ejected from the local pub, by the landlord, with the help of a rather large Alsatian. We were playing a match in the back room, and had gone past the 10:30pm Chucking-out time. You lot don't know you're born with your Table Tennis centres and facilities!

A memory which sticks in my mind is of reading Jack Carrington's coaching manual-- Jack was the instigator of the ETTA Coaching scheme in the 50's; the Johnny Leach and Victor Barna era. He came down to Guildford, from Ilford, for eight consecutive Sundays, to school myself and ten others in 1970, at the Pegasus club in Stoughton, in the noble art of coaching juniors. This literally got our 70's coaching scheme up and running--- In his introduction he said that: ***"There was probably a young goat herd, on some Tibetan hillside, that had the potential to become World Table Tennis Champion, but he would never get the chance" A sobering thought, indeed, especially if one considers how many of us really get to realise our full potential at anything- work or play.***

But I digress! Since I took on the post of Archivist I have spent many happy hours browsing through back copies of the Advertiser at 'The Mill' from the 40's to 1970. Making around 200 copies of press reports, all of them free –***thanks David Rose!*** And at the 'History Centre' in Woking, to cover the period from 1970 to the present Day-I am now something of an expert

(Has been, small drip under pressure) in working the film readers and printing out hard copies of Table Tennis reports, regrettably not free -some 400 by my reckoning. This enabled me to fill in the many gaps in our history.

Whilst we are on this subject: *I think much praise and thanks is due to Chris Dyke and Richard Spiller, the Sports Editors at the Advertiser, for our long term coverage. Chris and Richard have been plying their trade for a long time now, and have to consider and cater for so many different sports, and do this with equanimity. Thank you both!*

From me you must look forward to lots of controversial, sometimes outrageous statements, clichés and bad jokes, and not all in the best of taste. You may think that, in some cases, I have allowed my prejudices to override good sense, but surely this is better than just a dull insipid dialogue, full of facts and figures. It's more important to make life interesting don't you think? In any case what else do you expect from someone who: had little or no luck with the fair sex in my youth; who used to drive a Robin Reliant – shades of Del Boy!; Missed out on the 60's permissive society; and who graduated from, in the words of Tony Blair “A Bog Standard Secondary Modern” one of the first in fact- with absolutely no qualifications at all. But there, again, I made Senior Lecturer in Engineering & Became a Chartered Mechanical Engineer, also a Member of the Institute of Quality Assurance I hope you enjoy this dissertation from Ted and me. I have attempted to make it a “Good Read”. Thank you for making the purchase!

John Diggins January 2008

Chapter 1 The Early Years

The records of the Guildford Table Tennis Association began on a summer's evening in 1934, and the minutes of the first meeting read as follows:

“A meeting, convened by Mr. R.E. Smith, General Secretary of the Guildford Y.M.C.A was held at the Y.M.C.A on Thursday June 21st 1934. There were present, Mr E.K. Hunter, Mr J. Gammon, Mr R.E. Smith and representatives of the Y.M.C.A, Messrs. Gammon's and Messrs. Dennis' Table Tennis Clubs.

It was formally moved and agreed that Mr. Hunter be invited to take the chair at the meeting.

The object of the meeting, and particulars relating to the formation of a Table Tennis League and affiliation to the English Table Tennis Association were explained by Mr. R.E. Smith.

After some discussion it was unanimously resolved “That a Table Tennis League should be formed in Guildford. That the League be known as the Guildford and District Table Tennis League”.

Election of Officers: - It was unanimously agreed to invite Mr. E.K. Hunter to become the first President of the League, Mr. Hunter having agreed to give a Cup for competition. Mr Hunter accepted the office of President. It was proposed, seconded and carried unanimously, "That Mr. J. Gammon be appointed Chairman of the League". Mr. Gammon accepted.

To the combined office of Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer Mr. R.E. Smith was unanimously appointed.

Mr. J. Gammon was elected to represent the league on the General Council of the English Table Tennis Association.

It was agreed that one representative from each competing Club, together with the Officers, should form the League Committee.

It was also agreed to invite, through the Press, and personally where possible, all Table Tennis Clubs in the District to enter teams in the League.

It was pointed out that the League must become affiliated before October 15th and that all Clubs entering must pay the affiliation fee of 3/6d, to the League, before that date.

A vote of thanks to Mr. Hunter for presiding, and for the presentation of the Cup, was passed unanimously. The meeting was then closed.

The above minutes were signed by Mr. J. Gammon on August 23rd 1934.

And so table tennis in the Guildford district commenced on an organised basis, and seventy-five years later it flourishes, in what has become a vastly different world, but in a scope, and with a standard, and in a spirit of good sportsmanship of which our founders would be proud, and from which we can look back with grateful memory of those pioneers.

At the time of these first steps, in a Guildford without multi-storey car parks, Table Tennis itself, or at least, what became known as Table Tennis recognisable to the present day had a history of about thirty-five years? Its origins have been traced to a game called 'Gossima', to Croydon and a man named Gibb, and materials of cigar lids and champagne corks. The first recorded club was formed in the City of London and the first tournament was said to have been held at the Royal Aquarium in 1901. Although the benefits of rubber arrived later, the popularity of the game waned soon afterwards but did not die. The Ping Pong Association was given some respectability in 1921/2. The Table Tennis Association was renamed the English Table Tennis Association in 1927, and became a founder member of the International Table Tennis Federation with Austria, Germany and Hungary. Eight years before we, in Guildford, started there were nineteen affiliated leagues in England, and the expansion had begun.

Local research has shown that by the early 1930s some Table Tennis was being played in organisations such as the Y.M.C.A., at Guildford, and Godalming, Gammons' Store, 9th Guildford Rovers, Dennis', White's Store, Yellow Bus Service and another Y.M.C.A at

Tangley. Wonersh may also have had some Table Tennis played in the village. Friendly matches were played between some of these groups, and it is known that Gerald and Eric Lillywhite played exhibition matches at Kingpost, a restaurant in Burpham, but it is probable that the spark was really lit by the exhibition matches which were held in Guildford, by at least three International players. These were Adrian Haydon, Captain of England for several years (and father of Ann Jones, the tennis star), R.C. Dawson of the South London League, and Eric Finden from Liverpool, known as a model stylist and a journalist interested in publicising the game.

It was from R.C. Dawson that the Committee obtained advice on an appropriate organisation of a league. This advice was almost wholly acted upon, and because enquiries had failed to attract further entries to the League, the first year's competition, for the Cup presented by Mr E.K. Hunter, was battled by two sides from Guildford Y.M.C.A., one from Godalming Y.M.C.A., Brodians, Wonersh, and one from Gammons. Although the minute's record that the Committee accepted Mr. Dawson's advice that teams should consist of five players playing each other the best of three games, the Committee were wise enough to restrict play to a finish before midnight, and pace all matches over five by five single games. Gammons were the first trophy winners.

Amongst other Committee matters dealt with in that first year were: the expression of an inability to attend a Special General Meeting of the E.T.T.A in London; a recommendation to defer an entry to the National Wilmot Cup competition; and the selection of players to represent the Guildford League at the Sectional Trials for entry to the World Championships, the trials to be held at the Guildford Y.M.C.A. The selected squad comprised: J.R. Lock, Percy Boyd, and Fred Dancock from the Guildford Y.M.C.A., C. Smith and E. Waters from Gammons, Harold Kirby from the Godalming Y.M.C.A., H. Voller from Wonersh C.C.I and Ben Loveland from the Brodians club.

The first set of Rules were accepted by the Committee in November 1934 and the club entry fee was fixed at 5/-.

The first Annual General Meeting of the Association was held on September 9th 1935, and was attended by representatives from Guildford and Godalming Y.M.C.A.s, Gammons, Brodians, Yellow Bus Service and Hallonians. Applications for entry were welcomed from the Yellow Bus Service and Hallonians, but one from Woking Railway Athletic was rejected on the grounds of the transport difficulties it would cause to clubs on the other edge of the Guildford area.

Another 'First' took place at the Committee meeting of October 24th of that year, when it was decided to organise a singles and doubles Championship. Rules were decided upon, and the entry fees were fixed at 1/- for the Singles and 1/6d for each pair in the Doubles. The meeting on May 11th 1936 recorded the resignation of Mr. R.E. Smith from the post of Secretary because of his move from the district, and the election, and first mention of Mr. P.C. Lawes, as Match Secretary. Mr R.E. Smith is regarded as the initial driving force behind the birth of the

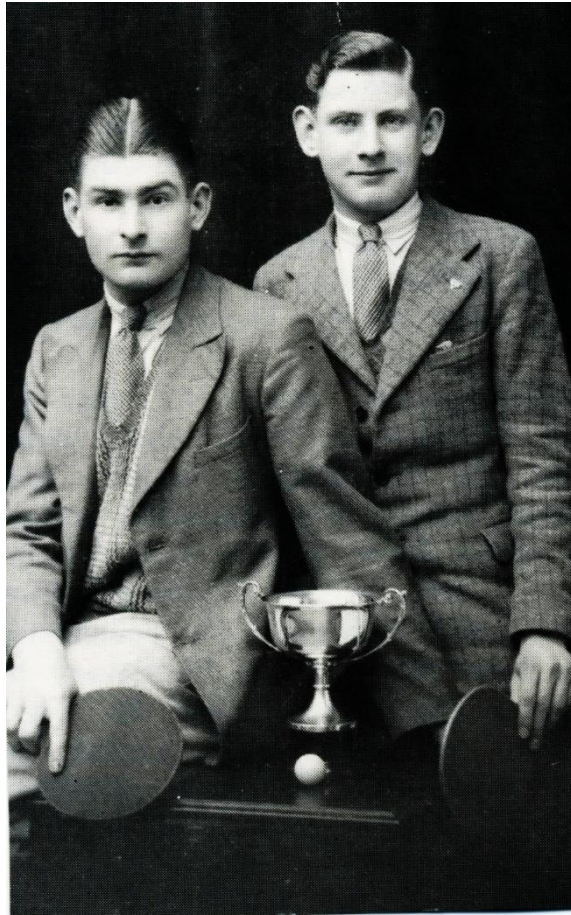
Guildford Association, and should perhaps head any roll of honour of the pioneers. Eric's name comes up again in Chapter 3.

So there is Percy Laws in 1935, and here he was in 1984 as President of the Association with, in between those dates, an unsurpassed record of devotion, hard work and enthusiasm in the good cause of our benefit.

The Association had already begun to look ahead and, even at this early stage, had begun to think about matches against other local leagues, and even to branching out on the social side by organising an Annual Dinner.

Our record of Cup winners begins here, and is headed by Len Chew in the singles, and the brothers Gerald and Eric Lillywhite in the doubles.

I have had the good fortune to meet both Gerald and Eric Lillywhite and from Gerald, who continued to play into the 1950s before leaving Guildford, Bill Marriott and I were able to glean happy memories of his early days with Godalming Y.M.C.A. Gerald took to the game at an early age, for those days, and used to practice by setting the table against the wall, and playing against himself. Eric Lillywhite told me that in their doubles partnership he used to keep the ball in play, and let Gerald win the points with a devastating forehand.



Gerald and Eric Lillywhite

It was in 1936/7 that the Association began to spread its wings, and to set the pattern for the steady development which, in retrospect, looks as though it would have been a continuous progress onwards if it had not been interrupted by the war. That season saw: the formation of two divisions, with eight teams in the First Division and seven in the Second; the inauguration of a Hospital Cup competition; and a very healthy entry to the domestic Individual Championships. The Hospital Tournament, for a trophy presented by Mr. Percy Johnson, appears to have been open for entry to the Guildford League, and other neighbouring clubs. The first recorded winners were L. Haring of Farnborough Y.M.C.A. in the Singles, and our Len Chew and C. Westwick of Guildford Y.M.C.A. in the Doubles. The tournament made a profit of nine pounds, which was donated to the Royal Surrey County Hospital.

In the domestic competitions there were fifty-eight entries for the Singles and eighteen for the doubles, a silver tankard for the winners, and a sixpenny admission fee to the Semi-Finals and Finals, which were held at the Stoke Hotel. There was a large crowd present on that occasion. They must have got their money's worth because, in addition to watching Len Chew beat Don Wells for the Singles title, and the Lillywhite brothers beat Cecil Davies and Frank Tomlinson of the Yellow Bus Service by 21-17 in the fifth set, they were also entertained by the first Inter-

League match played by Guildford, against Farnborough. In this first of hundreds of encounters with other organisations, Guildford's team of Gerald Lillywhite, Len Chew, E. Pavey (Brodians), Charles Smith (Gammons) and Cecil Davies began inauspiciously with a defeat by 17-5. Before this match, a team organised by Len Chew is recorded as having visited Hastings in a return match, and to have been conquered by 12- 4.

In the season 1937/8 the Guildford Y.M.C.A. was officially declared to be the Headquarters of the Association the number of teams was increased to twenty, and a third Division was formed. A Ladies Singles was brought into the Individual Championships, and the first winner was Miss Bowyer of the Gammons Club. Eric Lillywhite had left home to join the Palestine Police, so Gerald Lillywhite joined V. Slade to take the Doubles title, and also gained the first of his three successive Singles triumphs. He was allowed to retain the trophy, for these successes, which I have seen on his mantelpiece in Portsmouth.

The Management Committee had its problems. A recurring theme as we proceed through the years, and with the benefit of over forty-five year's perspective, we can be amused at the minutes of the meeting held on May 8th 1938. These show that the treasurer was absent, no balance sheet was provided, and the Secretary apologised for forgetting to bring the minutes of the previous meeting.

1938/9 had the makings of a fast approaching major expansion in our history. but outside events soon put a stop to that hope, but not, as you will see, to our existence. There were a total of twenty-nine teams arranged in three Divisions of men, and the first appearance of a Ladies Division. New clubs came from Aldershot Traction Company (perhaps they had their own transport), Onslow Village, Kingpost, Chilworth, Cow & Gate, Shalford and G.P.O Telephones. The balance in hand at the Annual General Meeting was 7/- and, not surprisingly, the entry fee rose to 7/6d. For one team and 10/- for two. Three inter-town matches were played, against Woking twice and Chertsey and we won all three.

On 27th March 1939 an Exhibition evening was staged at St. Saviours Hall, where there were fifty reserved seats at 1/- and fifty at 1/6d. The Inland Revenue were good enough to decide that no tax would be payable. The stars for the evening were Alec Brook (always a good friend of our Association), Charlie Seaman, W. Stennett, A. Leibster, and Gilbert Marshal, (known as the finger spin king).

The first Annual Dinner was held, on April 24th 1939, at the Napoleon Hotel, and was graced by six speeches. At that function Alec Brook presented the season's awards. It was here that Pat Fry, well known by a large number of our present players, and well remembered for her brilliant play, her shy disposition, and her exemplary behaviour, picked up the first of her 13 trophies as Ladies Champion. The Cup for the winners of the First Division went to Godalming Y.M.C.A., who, having tied at the top with Guildford Y.M.C.A., won a play-off by 13 - 12.

It was about this time that Percy Laws proposed that plans be laid for the formation of a boy's Division or section. There was, apparently, no suggestion of a scheme for girls, and the

Authorities would have had no idea that it was on the Ladies side that Guildford was, many years later, to achieve its great National successes.

Then came 1939/40. On September 5th, two days after the outbreak of war, the Annual General Meeting was held. On that evening Percy Lawes proposed, and it was agreed, that:

“The only course open to the meeting was to close the league for the time being. Although it was not easy to put on one side the results of years of hard work, there were much larger and more important things having to be put to one side.”

Only three months passed after that decision to cease activities, before it became evident that it would be possible to start up again, on a smaller scale, and a General Meeting was called on December 7th 1939. There was sufficient support to enable two divisions to be formed, of five teams each, and enough enthusiasm remaining to call for the Individual competitions to be continued. At a later stage applications were approved from G.P.O and St. John’s Ambulance, and twelve teams prepared for combat in the first season of blackouts and general foreboding.

The association, throughout the war years, at the request of, variously, the Red Cross and the Ministry of Information, set up a series of exhibition matches in aid of charities, and the first of these, held on January 31st 1940, was a tremendous success. The stars were: Richard Bergman, the current World Champion, Maurice Bergh, Jack Carrington, Dora Beregei, and Phyllis Hodgkinson, and so many spectators were attracted to attend that a profit of £20 was handed over to the Red Cross. At the end of the 1939/40 season Gerald Lillywhite was awarded the Singles trophy to hold after three successive wins, a feat copied by Pat Fry in the following year, and it is wonderful to consider that those two worthies were still with us in 1982.

For the 1941/42 season, there was a change to teams of four a side in the league, which brought competition to sixteen games a night and the opportunity for a draw result. Further exhibition matches were arranged, and during that season a total of £67 was handed over to the Red Cross and St. John’s Ambulance. The staggering amount of money so raised can be seen in perspective if put beside the price of 2/9d, charged by Alec Brook, for a Table Tennis bat at that time.

In 1942/3 there were good and obvious reasons for the fall in membership of the League, and only eight sides were then in competition. Typically named clubs at that time were Report Centre, St. John’s and the N.F.S. The County Police were the dominant club in those days and their Charlie Andrews won the Singles championship for three years, from the season 42/45. The following season saw a challenge from sides such as: the 3rd Mobilisation Centre; Ardents 615; and B Platoon of the R.A.S.C. An encouraging pointer towards the future was the imaginative act to set up a Junior Division of five teams, as was the inclusion of a ‘Scholars Singles’ in the Annual Individual Tournament. This was won for the first two seasons by Derek Tomlin of the Covenanters. The Ladies Division was set up again in the 1944/5 season, and the total participating teams rose to seventeen. The Scholars’ Doubles was won by Derek Tomlin

and Roy Boswell -this second name brings us well within grasp of 1984 as Roy, the founder of the Merrow Village Table Tennis Club, was still chiselling away in the higher reaches of the League.

A list of Officials, who have worked at the top level for the Association over the years, can be found in the Appendix, but particular mention must be made of those who maintained the impetus throughout the war years. Those named, and there will have been many whose names do not appear in readily available records, are: Percy Lawes, Reg Palmley, R.J. Baker, H.G. Drake, E.K. Hunter, R.E. Smith, H. Gammon, and W.G. Ford, and it was Percy Lawes who held the double posts of Secretary and Treasurer throughout that period.

Chapter 2 1945 – 1952

There now began a period of steady development and the commencement of expanding interest beyond the immediate local scene. Table Tennis had become almost a major sport, and it takes a feat of imagination to accept that, for the 1946 English Finals at Wembley, all the tickets were sold, and our organisers were able to obtain one coach load only for a visit by all those who wished to attend. The Surrey County Association had just been set up, and it took over from us the organisation of the Inter Town competitions. The Percy Johnson Cup, presented in memory of a member of the Royal Surrey Hospital Revenue Committee, had been fostered by us for some time, and we inaugurated the Arthur Williams Cup, the name of another of our early benefactors, for the Ladies Inter Town competition.

The Aldershot League had been set up in 1944/5 with two Divisions, and began its own illustrious history. The Farnborough side, referred to earlier, appeared to have slipped away into obscurity, but it is understood that it may have consisted only of the Royal Aircraft Establishment, and been absorbed by the new League.

The 1945/6 year saw: an away match at Byfleet, for which the team and supporters paid two shillings each, to be transported by coach; and the first record of centrally organised coaching. This was held in the old St. Saviours Hall and run by Bill Little. The Reverend Reg Palmley had to resign for personal reasons, after more than seven years as Chairman of the Association, and the name of Jack Harrington appeared in our records for the first time as the winner of the Scholars' Singles.

All Individual finals, except for the Men's, were over the best of three, and the senior title was won by H.A. Price. Ben Loveland took over as Chairman, and began a career of Committee service which continued to 1965. The League Championship was taken by the Report Centre, a club which, in accordance with the dictates of outside events, then disappeared from view.

In the 1946/7 season Gerald Lillywhite returned from Active Service to recapture the Mens Singles. In the final he beat 18-year-old Jack Harrington by three sets to one, and this event was found worthy of a rare Table Tennis mention in the Surrey Advertiser. That year's Annual General Meeting made the decision to change the match format to teams of four, playing eight singles the best of three. The team entry fee was fixed at 10/6d for a first team, and 4/6d for each additional side. The individual players own registration fee was not a crippling imposition- but the sum of 2d. The Secretary, Percy Lawes, was elected to the County Committee, and was entrusted by the Guildford committee with the task of buying a second hand table for £2. A Dinner was held at Nuttalls Restaurant, for which tickets were obtainable for 8/6d, and a profit of £8 was made. The Finals night was held in Holy Trinity Hall for a booking fee of £3, and 130 tickets were obtained for the Wembley Finals at 6/6d each, with a coach fee of 2/6d.

A sub-committee was set up to arrange for the issue of a Handbook, but it is apparent that they were not successful as the first official Guildford Handbook did not appear until 1953.

1947/8 saw the advent of the Polish players associated with the Resettlement Camp at Witley.

Busbridge was the star club, winning the Club Championship for the second successive season and becoming the first winners of the Percy Lawes Knockout Cup. This cup was presented, anonymously, to the Association in the name of Percy Lawes, in recognition of his tremendous contribution to the fortunes of the game in Guildford. Some years later it became known that the anonymous donor was Ben Loveland.

In this season the basis of competition was changed to matches between teams of three players, playing each other over the best of three, with no doubles. The players' registration fee rose by 2d. to 6d, and the first county match to be seen in Guildford saw Surrey's Second Division side play Hampshire. The Polish Y.M.C.A. entered the league, and immediately made a mark with successes in both the Singles and Doubles championships. The stars of the Polish players were Messrs. Leewandowski, Richard Regel, Antony Kita, Eddie Kulik and Eric Grabiec. One record was made by Eric Grabiec, which I cannot see ever being equalled.

In 1948 Grabiec not only won the Men's Singles, but he took the doubles with Richard Regel, and then continued to make his mark on the Doubles Cup for the next nine successive years. Seven of these wins were in partnership with Jack Harrington, and in most of these the standard of play was the most exhilarating to witness in the whole history of our Championships.

The Polish Y.M.C.A. side, and the other Polish side from Witley, S.C. Jasper, were in the league for only three seasons, before most of their players placed themselves in other parts of the world. I have gleaned that Richard Regel went to Chicago and at one time made a sentimental journey back to Guildford, to seek out old friends.

Eric Grabiec and Eddie Kulick stayed on in Guildford, as did Henry Przadka, who had starred for S.C. Jasper. Eddie Kulik was a player with a formidable record, winning the Men's title for two seasons from 1948/9, and the Veterans in 1957/8 and 1962/3. Eddie stood with his feet fixed to the floor, with his tummy against the table, and blocked, or appeared to block, every ball that was hurled or pushed at him. In the words of the old song, "I remember him well" because he robbed me of my one possible entry in the records, when he beat me two sets to one, and on time limit, in the 1963 final of the Veterans' Singles.

Doris Penny, who performed sterling work on the administration side for many years, won the Ladies title for the second occasion in her four successes, and played for the town team against Dorking and Horsham, and was selected for the County match versus Essex. Around this time the Byfleet league was set up, and one result of the establishment of the National Health Service was the diversion of the profit, from the staging of the Percy Johnson Inter League matches, from the County Hospital to Table Tennis funds. We were still in the period when semi-finals and finals only were held on a separate occasion and, not for the only time; there was a protest at the lack of coverage given by the local press to that event.

The season 1948/9 must have begun with an atmosphere of crisis because the Annual General Meeting, at which the Treasurer reported a debit balance of over £22, was adjourned at 10:15 p.m. on 31st August and reconvened on 20th September. Team fees were then increased to 15/- for first and 5/- for subsequent teams, and the registration fee rose to 1/- a player. The fixture list was priced at 6d, and a welcome gift of £1.16s was made by the Polish Y.M.C.A. arising from the profits of a match played against a town team.

An indication of the financial plight of the Association can be seen from the record, that in order to obtain tickets for a trip to the English Finals at Wembley, Albert Cumper of the Gomshall club, handed over a cheque for £27 as a loan to be used for that purpose. This parlous state did not inhibit activities on the table or enthusiasm from the supporters, as the hiring of two coaches for a match against Croydon shows. In May of 1949 a town team played a return match against the Polish Y.M.C.A. and went down 6 – 3. Les Cannon made his debut for the Town against Byfleet, partnering Gerald Lillywhite, Eddie Kulik and Richard Regel.

There was no mention of financial distress at the Annual General Meeting to herald the 1949/50 season, although it again took place on two evenings, but it did record a hearty vote of thanks to Ron Brine for his excellent press coverage. For the first time it was decided the medals were to be presented to the Individual event winners, and an 8-page folder fixture list was produced at the cost of £7.10s.6d and sold to players at 6d each. Guildford entered the National Rose Bowl competition, and for the home match against Woolwich at the Congregational Hall: 75 Crown Folios were printed; the Odeon and Playhouse Cinemas were asked to display an advertisement on the screen; 60 reserve seats at 1/6d and 100 unreserved at 1/- were produced, and 3d charged for a stencilled programme.

No record can be found of the match, but in that negative knowledge, I presume that we lost. Our earlier benefactor, Albert Cumper, presented a Cup in respect of the Sub-Division Knock-Out event, and for the Finals night at the Congregational Hall, the Committee organised a raffle, and arranged for an M.C. and a Referee. The season ended with a highly successful Dinner and Social at the Eashing Farm Dairies at a cost of 7/6d a ticket, stage managed by a sub-committee of Stan Fry, Percy Lawes and Ben Loveland.

The 1950/51 season saw the number of teams increase to 68, including a Ladies Division of twelve teams, but began with a general apology issued to winners of the Individuals for the inability to provide trophies. The Polish Y.M.C.A had closed down, but not before their Chairman wrote to state that “Members of the Y.M.C.A. would remember the good times they had had with the Association, wherever they were in the future”.

The Enterprise Club, which had been set up in the previous year, now began their magnificent period of success which lasted right through to the 1967/8 season, and although they did not always come out top in the League and Cup they had by far the most consistent record over that long period. Their stars, such as Jack Harrington, Ronnie Rees, Frank Robins, Eric Grabiec, Eddie Kulik, Charlie Cann, Basil West and Pat Fry, made the platform of excellence which the League required, and from which later stars were able to take off.

In the 1951/2 season the League title was taken by the Normandy Club, and their John Gunner won the Scholars' Singles. An attempt was made to organise the whole of the Individual Tournaments on one day, but the idea was outvoted on Committee. It was agreed, however, to hold the 'Minor' events on one day and the 'Senior' on a later date. It had long been an objective to organise the tournaments from start to finish under one roof, but eight more years were to elapse before that ambition was realised. This season, however, did end in a blaze of glory, when 400 people attended the Finals night at the Congregational Hall. In addition to the sight of our own top players, they were treated to exhibition matches by Victor Barna, Alec Brook - who had just won the E.T.T.A. Closed Veterans' title- and one Vicente Cutiorrez. This latter gentleman was the Chilean champion who, when playing Victor Barna "Lay on the ground or on the table or ran round it to bring off his shots, held his bat between his teeth, kicked or blew the ball".

1951/2 was the year when George Cannon took on the task of Press Secretary, and did a magnificent job in that most necessary area.



Jack and Fred Pratt 1950

Chapter 3 1952 – 67

The fifteen-year period from the beginning of the 1952/3 season to the end of the 1966/7 season commenced with Enterprise as League Champions and Jack Harrington as holder of the Singles title. It ended with Enterprise still champions, but with Tony Miller taking over as the Individual Star.

At the outset in 1952: Ben Loveland was Chairman and Percy Lawes held the dual posts of Secretary and Treasurer; Doris Penny was lady champion; Frank Hazlewood of Normandy had the Veterans Cup; and Andrew Wright won the Scholars' trophy.

When the spring of 1967 arrived: Doreen Allison of Pegasus had completed eleven seasons as Secretary, and moved over to the Chairman's post; I began a five-year spell as Match Secretary; Sue Light was top lady; Roe Delahaye won the Veterans'; and Jimmy Ahmah held the junior title. The strength of the League had grown from 69 teams to reach 103 divided into nine Divisions. The explosion was about to begin.

It was in 1953 that the sponge bat came back, reintroduced by H. Satah of Japan, and began to cause all sorts of problems to both players and administrators across the world. The game changed into a more technical stage, and it took a number of years for ordinary club players to get used to this new age, and for most of them to put away the good old hard bats they loved. Some fairly ordinary players increased their effectiveness overnight as it were, and others were all at sea for a period. It was not until six years later that the thickness of the sponge was regulated.

The 1952/3 season saw the inauguration of the Premier Division, thus fulfilling a long held ambition of the hard working George Cannon. The division consisted of six teams, and the competition lay between Busbridge, Enterprise, Guildford Wednesday, Normandy, Over 18s and Pegasus. Enterprise was the first Premier Division winners. This year a Fixture Card was introduced, which included lists of club officials and addresses and, amongst several advertisements, one from Alec Brook Ltd for Japanese sponge or crepe bats at 10/- each. Admission to the Individual Finals night was 2/- for unreserved seats, and for the wealthier citizens reserved seats could be obtained for 3/- and 4/-. On this occasion an exhibition was provided by the Rowe twins, Diane and Rosalind.

The Railway Hotel was the venue of the Annual General Meeting to introduce the 1953/4 season, and the Association's first official Handbook, printed by Messrs. Cramptons of Milford, made its appearance, just in time for the first matches. A county match, against Essex, was arranged at St. Saviours Hall, and 350 spectators saw a 5 -5 draw. There was great excitement at another County match in Guildford when Surrey beat Middlesex, and so won the Premier Division for the first time. John Pullen was the tournament Secretary, and was able to get Richard Bergman, several times World Champion, to give an exhibition with the Surrey star, Ken Craigie, on Finals night.

As can be seen from the above records, Guildford was thinking 'big' and the crowds were patronising its activity but, in what looks from the perspective of several years later to be an unfortunate situation, the Committee was forced to decline an invitation from the E.T.T.A to stage an International match, or a semi-final or final of the Wilmott Cup or J.M. Rose bowl.

The growth of an insurable collection of silver trophies began to accelerate, and in this one year Mr E. Glew gave the President's Cup for the Veterans' Singles, Mr Goddard gave the Goddard Cup for the Premier Division, Mr Arnett one for the Fifth Division, and Doreen Allison one for the Ladies Consolation Singles.

The Annual General Meeting at the end of the 1953/4 season was held at the Trades and Labour Club on The Mount. The key to the forward thinking necessary at this point in the history of the Association was given by the Secretary and Vice-Chairman, Mrs. Doris Penny. She declared that "The Association should think carefully whether it had come to the time when it should purchase its own table, pay for the coaching of younger players, and find its own premises"

At this time, the decision was made, at a Special pre-season meeting, that the formations of the Divisions for the forthcoming season should be made, and, although this first effort was highly successful, later meetings for that purpose became a shambles of a sort, and a mockery of how such matters should be dealt with. Rather belatedly, the Ladies Division was done away with, and they merged with the men from then on.

In December 1954 the Committee sent a letter to the Surrey Advertiser, alleging misrepresentation and delay in Table Tennis reports, and it was noted that, while no acknowledgement was received, the coverage did improve on both accounts. The E.T.T.A had commenced to run courses at Lilleshall, but in the view of the Committee there appeared to be no suitable candidates to send from Guildford.

The town team travelled to Camberley with Bill Marriott as reserve to back up the first string of Jack Harrington, Des Woolgar, Frank Robbins and Charlie Cann. John Pullen continued as Tournament Secretary, and celebrated by passing the test to become a County Umpire. Johnny Leach, England's second World Champion, and Viktor Barna entertained 300 spectators at the Finals night, and Pat Fry won the Ladies' singles for the eighth time.

The Annual General Meeting on 25th May 1955 looked back on a successful season, which had: seen a record entry for the Individual Championships; the inauguration of Knockout Cup competitions for the junior divisions and the Ladies; and the staging of a County match against Gloucestershire. Seventy-seven teams were organised into seven Divisions to battle out for glory in the 1955/6 season under the guidance of Di Doe as Match Secretary. An application was received from Ewhurst, and was rejected on the grounds that travel difficulties would be too great.

This was one of the years when the Management Committee was dominated, at least in numbers, by the Pegasus Club which had been formed in 1952/3. The Chairman was Jack

Arnett, Secretary Doreen Allison, Match Secretary Di Doe, Press was George Cannon and Tournament Secretary was Brian Mountain. At that time, and for another eight years, the Committee was made up of the Officers and one representative of each club.

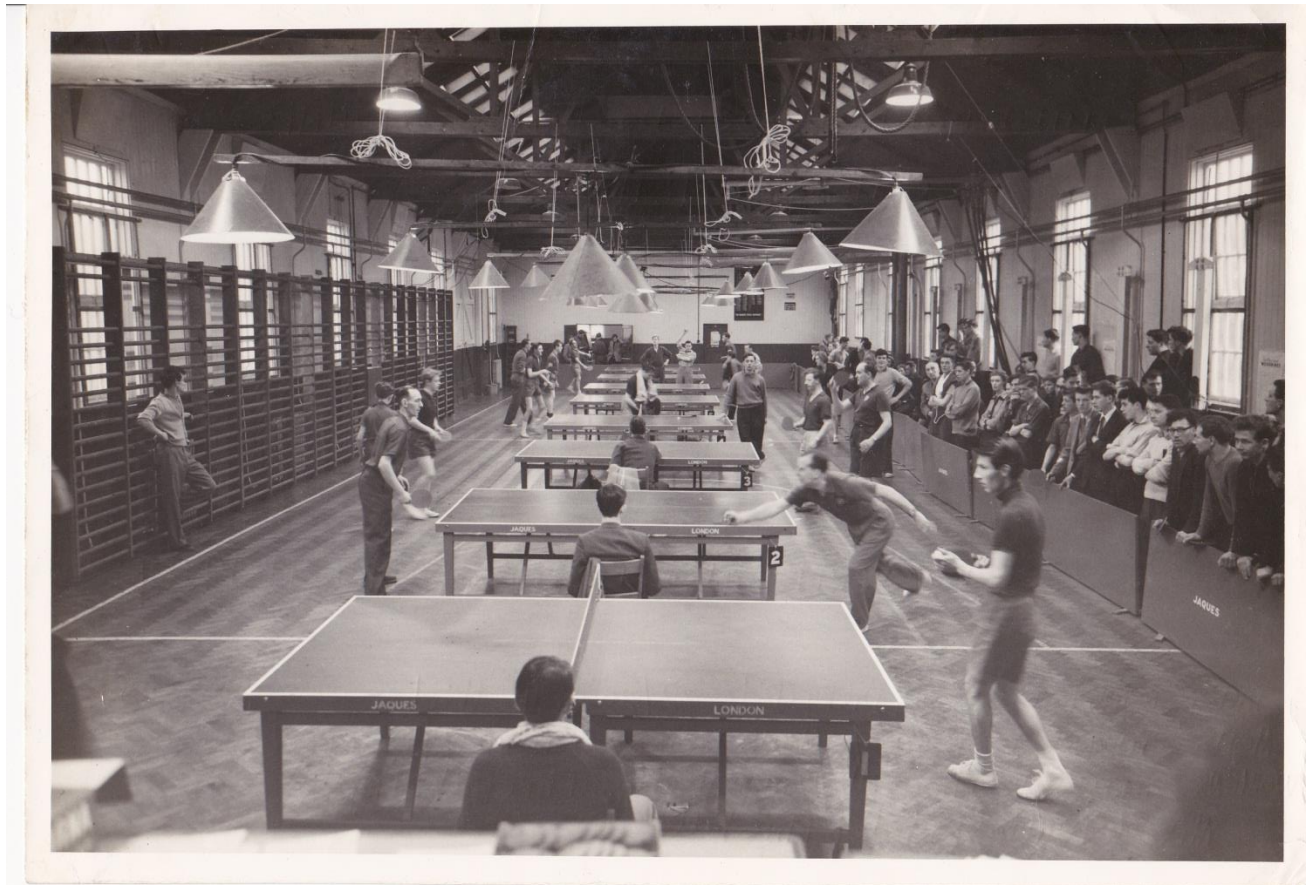
Junior County trials were held in September, and nominated to attend by Guildford were: Ann King, Wendy Lewis, John Carragher, Dave Crowley, Cliff Keen and Jimmy Spence. Only Jimmy and Wendy were accepted for special coaching by the County, and Wendy went on to win the County Junior Girls' title.

Although it was some time since the sponge bat revolution began, they were now beginning to be regularly used by a few local players, and I well remember Reg Francis of the Guildford Wednesday club creating havoc with his mastery of the new technique. Some mighty players were swept aside by Reg, until his game was rumbled.

Trials were held for the Town teams early in the season, and the favoured selection was: Eric Grabiec, John Fisher and Denis Culmer from the Pegasus club; Ronnie Rees, Jack Harrington and Frank Robbins from Enterprise; and Peter Gerring and Don Nicholson from Guildford Wednesday. Short listed as likely lads for the future were: Bernard Hobbs of Normandy; Bill Marriott of Guildford Wednesday; Les Harris, Colin Tester and Charlie Cann from Enterprise; and Jack White of Pegasus. The chosen ladies were: Ann King and Betty Forest of Enterprise; Kathleen King of Guildford Police; Vera Wilkinson of the Royal Air Force Association; Doreen White from Uplands; Beryl Hunt of Normandy; Joyce Holt and Winifred Stone of Pegasus and Doris Penny of Over 18s.



Annual Dinner 1956 Bill Marriott, Percy Lawes, Mrs Lawes, Alec Brook and Guest, Freda Rees, Ron Rees, Frank Robbins.



The scene shows The Guildford Closed Championships at Stoughton Barracks in March 1959

Jack Harrington was beaten 22-20 in the third by Dicky Clode in the Mens Singles!

1955/6 was my fourth year in the Guildford League and, after short periods with Gomshall and then Pegasus, I settled down for a good spell with the Uplands club. These were the days when car ownership had not quite reached the stage when each team could find one between its three members, and most travelling was done by bus, cycle, or on foot. I played for Uplands C team

in the Second Division, and could not have caused much distress amongst my opponents, as the team finished the season in seventh place out of eleven sides. Uplands played somewhere in the premises of the Ministry of Agriculture, and we travelled to: Enterprise in St. Luke's' Hall in Addison Road; the Fire Station in Lady mead; Busbridge in the Parish Hall in Brighton Road, Godalming; Pegasus at the Star Inn in Quarry Street; Merrow Village in the Village Hall; R.A.F.A in Astra House in the Portsmouth Road; Friary in their canteen in Onslow Street; and Guildford Police in their station in Woodbridge Road.

I can remember: playing at Enterprise, finishing with a long pushing three setter with Bob Hammond and, at about 11:30 p.m., helping him lug out about a couple of score of school benches back into position ready for the following day; facing my opponent at the Fire Station to see him disappear down the pole when the alarm sounded; grovelling for the ball behind the piano which occupied a complete corner of the hut at Bramley. Another vivid memory is of a match against the Police, being interrupted suddenly, in mid-stroke, by the umpire shouting "Attention" as the Chief Constable walked in. Players I can recall from those days included: pen holder Bill Dakeyne, and Arthur Sinden at the Fire Station; the brilliant attacking Pat Fry, Betty Forest, George Wooler and the hard working Stan Fry at Enterprise; Colin Bellchambers and Mick Walker at Friary; and Fred Pratt, Andrew Wright and John Carragher at Pegasus. There was the squad of Phil Nichols, Geoff Jones, Frank Myers, Peter Sales, Fred Drinkwater, Arthur Denyer and Peter Cole in Uplands' two sides, and the R.A.F. stars were Ray Potter and Vera and Harry Wilkinson; Jack Pratt, Cliff Keen and Ken Readman were the opposition at Busbridge; Tony Alder was the key man at Merrow, and Fred Oliver was the ace of the Police and a player that I never mastered.

The 1956/7 season heralded in the inclusion of the doubles game in league matches, but only for the Premier to Third Division. The 21st Anniversary Trophy for presentation to the person judged to have given the most sterling service to the Association was given to Doreen Allison, and Dicky Clode and Roy Fairhead were amongst the nominations for coaching sessions by Surrey. As a sign of the changing times, only 47 seats at 13/6d each were booked for the coach to Wembley for the English Open.

There was a sentimental atmosphere at the Annual Dinner Dance at the Wooden Bridge, as Bill Marriott was sped on his way to New Zealand, with a travelling clock as a gift from the Association.

Up till this time the Individual Tournaments had been organised on a basis of, all the earlier rounds being played separately, on club premises, up to the semi-final or finals stage. Through the enthusiasm of various committee members 1957 saw the first step towards complete integration, with all rounds up to the semi-final stage being held under one roof at the R.A.C. Barracks at Stoughton. Brian Mountain was the architect of these first arrangements and he was well served by Charlie Cann in his capacity of Press Secretary.

Following finals night, the Management Committee had to decide the destination of the new Giant Killers Cup, presented by Bill Marriott, to the performer of the outstanding feat at the

Annual Tournament. This 'First' went to Dicky Clode, who played in the Fifth Division, in his first ever season, and had knocked out two Premier Division players, before going out in



***Friary Team – Winners of Intermediate Cup in 1957
Colin Bellchambers, Ted Sinden, Colin Fowler***

the fourth round.

The Annual General Meeting of 16th May 1957 was graced by the presence of Mr. Eric Smith, one of the founders of the Association, and the accounts were certified as correct, by Roy Killeen, an arch pusher if there ever was one, who soon afterwards departed for a life in Australia. John Pullen retired as Town Match Secretary, Di Doe continued as Press Secretary. Austen Taylor, a Pegasus stalwart, took on the task of Match Secretary, and Doreen Allison entered her third of eleven years as General Secretary. Jack Harrington ran a summer coaching scheme, with the help of Roy Fairhead, and was pleased with the progress made by the pupils. A fillip was given to the idea of encouraging the youngsters by the Surrey Junior Ranking trials posting Dave Crowley as Number One, and Dicky Clode as Number Three.

There was a note in the Minutes which showed that, in those days, an application for entry by a new club was followed by a visit to the premises, for the purpose of approving the conditions before acceptance to the fold.

Jack Harrington won his eighth successive singles championship in 1957/8, and came back eight years later to make it nine.

In the 1958/9 season the experiment of dividing the Premier Division into A and B sections, of six teams each, was tried in the hope of raising standards. The A Division consisted of Pegasus, Saracen, Friary, Normandy and two Enterprise sides. The experiment was discontinued in the following year. With inspired timing the Management Committee arranged a meeting for 2nd December 1959, the day of the Great Smog, and the record shows that there was only a small attendance. Only 32 fans went to Wembley for the Championships, but 200 spectators turned up for the win by Surrey over Yorkshire, and helped to make a profit of £11 for the County coffers. Roy Fairhead did a stint as General Secretary in 1959/60, and John Pullen started off a six year spell as Tournament Secretary. Basil West took over from Dave Crowley as Singles Champion; Pat Fry reasserted herself as top lady instead of Wendy Lewis; Fred Pratt won the Veterans' title, and Rodney Lawes, the son of the Chairman, won the junior competition.

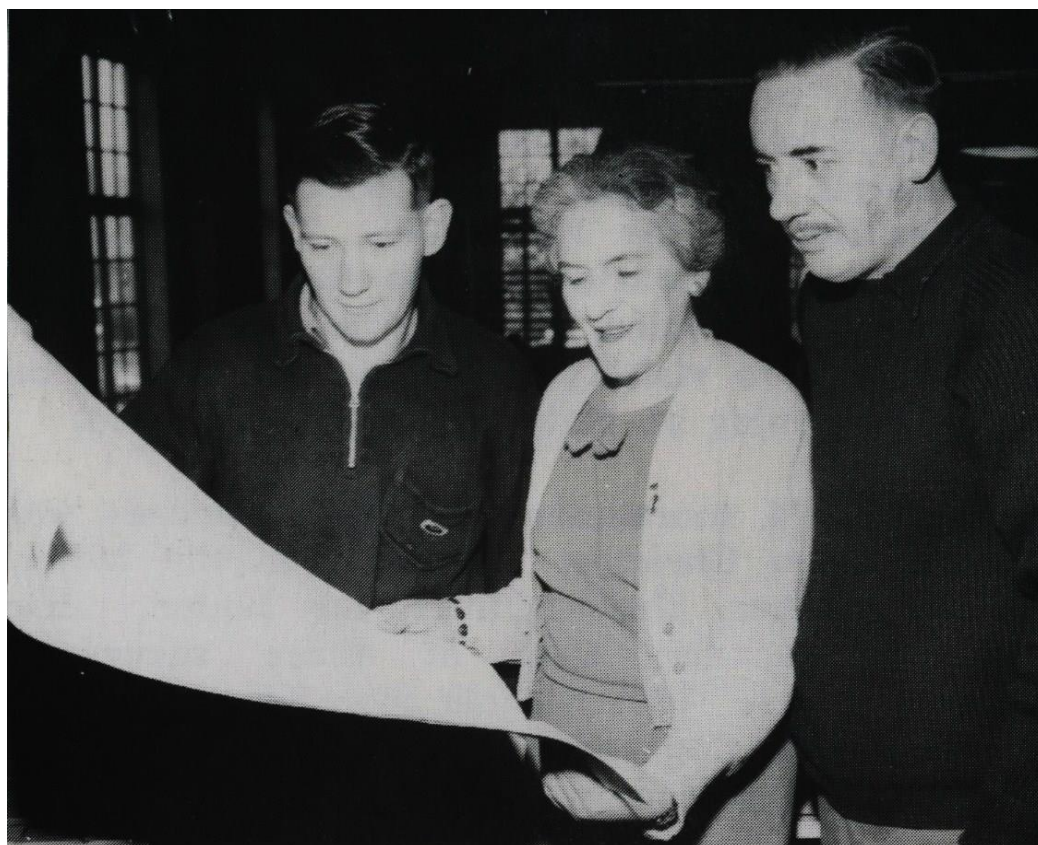
The sandwich bat came in that season, and, as a sign of the fast approaching 'Improvements' to the town, St. Saviours Hall was lost to the developers.



Eddy Kulik and Pat Fry



Guildford Town Team 1961/62 Percy Johnson Cup Winners Ron Rees Jack Harrington Dicky Clode Dave Crowley Peter Gerring



Bill Marriott Doreen Allison John Pullen



Bill Marriott presenting Giant Killers Cup to Derek Oliver and John Diggins

The 1961/2 season began on a low note when the Annual General Meeting reported that the hope of organising a coaching scheme had collapsed, because the cost and associated problems had proved to be insurmountable. Later in the year the E.T.T.A. ruled that Wendy Lewis' reflecting bat was illegal. Spirits rose later on when Guildford won the Inter League Percy Johnson Cup, with a powerful squad of Jack Harrington, Dicky Clode, Dave Crowley, Charlie Cann, Ronnie Rees and Peter Gerring. The season ended in triumph, with the Individual Tournament being organised under one roof, and over two days, for the very first time. Our benefactors were Messrs. Dennis and this happy venue was used from then on, until the numbers of participants became so great that we had to move to a more capacious hall. One of the delightful aspects of this venue was the way in which spectators could become an intimate part of the occasion. Many of our members must have fond memories of those events, even those who waited outside, in the early morning, for Bob Hammond to turn up with the keys! Dicky Clode, Christine Raggett, Eric Maybank (veterans) and Malcolm Wenn (intermediate) were the first winners at Dennis'.

That year's Dinner Dance cost 13/6d a ticket and a loss of £11 was made. These occasions were most enjoyable, with old friends getting together, much silverware being well polished by Doreen Allison, speeches by Percy Lawes, and others, and no breathalysers on the way

home. At that time a meeting was held in Cranleigh, with the object of forming a local league but came to nothing, and six years later Cranleigh joined the Guildford League, and played a large part in our activities.

1962/3 was the year of the entry of Ash as champions, and the debut of Bob Hammond, on the Management scene, for the first of many years of sterling service. Cyril Amey continued to issue a Newsletter to clubs, and the second successful Tournament at Dennis' made a profit of £33. Brian Mountain took over the Chair from Percy Lawes, Roy Fairhead did his second year as Match Secretary, and Cyril Amey was in charge of the Knockout competitions. These were comparatively quiet times with the club strength staying steady at around the level of 84 teams.

In 1963/64 the Management Committee constitution was changed by the introduction of an elected list of non-office-holding members, instead of that of one member for each club. The first of these elections produced Bob Hammond, John King, John Haskins, Brian Harris and I. Brian began a very successful spell as the organiser of the Handbook. This latter job included: the preparation of the fixture list from the material provided by clubs, and the need to ensure that two visiting teams did not turn up on the same evening at clubs with only one table.

In the tournament a family success was featured, when Christine Raggett won the ladies' and her brother, Derek Oliver, the junior. Eric Grabiec took the first of three successive veterans' titles. Phil Nichols took over charge of the Knockout Cup competitions for this one year, and then disappeared from our ranks.

The Annual General Meeting to close off the 1964/5 season reported a loss of £14 on the Dinner/Dance at the Stoke Hotel, maintained the registration fee at 3/6d, and brought back Percy Lawes for his last spell as our Chairman. In September one of the key figures in the post-war administration, Ben Loveland, died. To commemorate Ben, a fine Men's Doubles Trophy was provided as a memorial to him, and the first winners were Basil West and Ro Delahaye of the Enterprise Club, which again headed the Premier Division, also taking the Percy Lawes Cup. There were new individual winners: Basil West, an ace defender, and Sue Light of Pegasus. The league had grown to eight divisions and 93 teams. In that year Tom Harden, Brian Cresswell and John Stiff joined the Committee, Charlie Cann came back to be Knock Out Cup Secretary, Sid Jensen took on the increasingly difficult task of Town Match Secretary, and I did a pretty poor job as the Press man.

The Committee held an inquest on the experiment of the Dennis Tournament, and Bob Hammond and John Pullen reported that an examination of that premises' floor showed it to be less slippery and that Bob would ensure that no polish would be laid on the floor in the two weeks before the date of the Tournament. With the Brookwood club a match was arranged between Surrey and the visiting Australian team. As an inkling of things to come there was a note in the Minute Book that Charlie Cann was to give coaching to the Burpham Civic Youth Club, and another to the effect that an application from the Surrey player, Tony Miller, to play for the Newlands club in the Fifth Division was rejected on the grounds that the timing was too late in the season, and that his standard was too high.

In 1965/6 Derek Wenn did a better job of publicity, John Haskins began three years as Treasurer, Bob Hammond doubled as Tournament and Knock-Out Cup Secretary, and Diane Baxter came on the Committee. Although the participants dropped to 89 teams, our geographical area, and standard of competition increased, with the acceptance of entries from West End and College Hill. The Town team, in the Percy Johnson cup, consisted of Jack Harrington, Basil West, Cliff Keen and Keith Lyons. Jack, Christine Raggett, and Eric Grabiec won their last titles in the Tournament and David Phelps thumped his way to the men's singles final, as a 16-year-old junior, taking out star players West, Lyons and Dave Gray- finally losing to Jack.



The Young Dave Phelps with a Massive Haul of Trophies

Earlier that year Bill Marriott had produced his 'History of the Association' for the period to 1964: a labour of love, nostalgia, humour, and fact, and a fine testament to a marvellous game, the spirit in which it had been played and the people who had passed across the local stage, both as players, and as actors behind the scenes. As far as I am aware the future cannot yet be foretold, and I think that is a good thing. About this time Bill Marriott wrote a letter to the Surrey Advertiser, and Derek Wenn echoed him in an interview, in a rather pessimistic mood, expressing misgivings about the future of Table Tennis because of the lack of youngsters coming through into the top echelons of the League. That was the picture at that time, and I return to it at the end of this chapter.

In 1966/7 Doreen Allison began a three-year stint as Chairman, Bill Marriott tried his hand as General Secretary, and Les Parker, the long serving key figure in Guildford Wednesday club, joined the Committee. I commenced a very enjoyable five-year spell as Match Secretary, the

most satisfying job on the Committee, and Di Doe did her last stint with the Press. The Handicap Cup competition was born and, for the first year at least, was organised on a non-scientific basis, in ignorance of the magic charts produced by brainy people in later years, and won by one Brookwood team beating another in the final. Straws in the wind were felt and seen. The Battersea College of Technology was about to be converted into the University of Surrey, and an encouraging message of interest in our activities was received from Dr. Clark of that establishment. A Building Sub-Committee was set up to consider the practicability of acquiring a playing and administrative building of our own in town. A meeting on 24th November was told by Di Doe that, although we were getting fair coverage in the press, the then Sports Editor would not allow individual names to be included in the columns. That meeting also considered a letter from one Trevor Channing, which suggested that: the following Annual General Meeting should consider fining, up to £1, all clubs not attending the meeting; the presentation of trophies at the Annual General Meeting rather than at the Dinner/Dance; and for Certificates to be given to the winning team in each division. At the end of the 1966/7 season, we had been in existence for thirty-three seasons, and one hundred and three teams in nine Divisions did weekly battle. The Annual Tournament was well run and well attended in a happy atmosphere, and the Knock-Out Cups were fiercely contested and the finals played in front of a fair number of supporters. Where could we go from there?

Susan Henderson was then aged fifteen, her sister was twelve, Trevor Channing was about to erupt on the scene, John Diggins was beginning to think, seriously, about a coaching drive, but the seething mass of youngsters at Bellfields on a Sunday morning was not yet even a dream. Even more remote was the vision of nearly a thousand spectators at a Guildford staged International, or the prospect of Guildford winning National cup competitions, and providing its own Internationals to the English records. Who was to know that in those days, that before very long Guildford was to be one of the ten largest leagues in the country, and by far the largest per head of population-it was about to happen!

Chapter 4 Some Personalities

A. Percy Lawes

Percy Lawes, or ‘Mr. Table Tennis’ as he was known for the first 20 years or so of the Association’s existence, received his first mention in our annals when he attended a meeting of the Management Committee on 11th May 1936, and took on the post of Match Secretary. In 1959/60 he was appointed to the Office of President of the Association, and he still proudly held that title through the League’s golden jubilee.

His positions of trust and responsibility are unique in themselves, and are on record. There are few people left who could put a proper value on the tremendous amount of enthusiasm and dedication, through which he was able to guide the fledgling body of the Association, in the very early days, the war years, and the steady growth after the war, and to give his successors the guidance necessary to cope with the take-off years in the recent past.

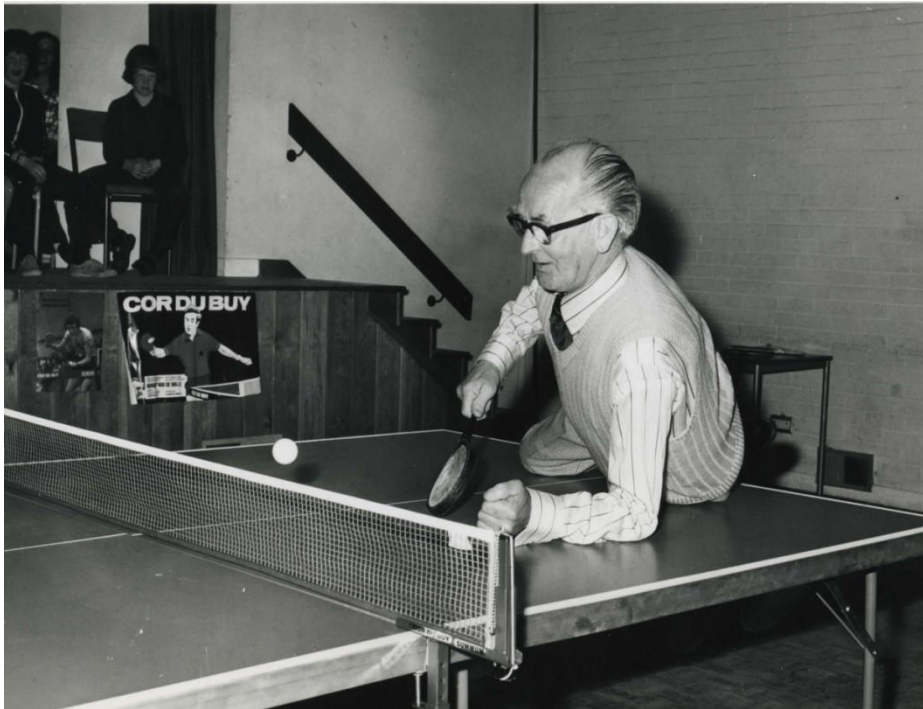
Percy was: General Secretary for sixteen successive years from 1938 to 1953; Treasurer for fourteen of those years; and Chairman for seven years between 1957 and 1965; in the latter years of those periods he also held High Office on the Surrey Committee.

It was his influence and organising ability which lay behind, not only the early individual championships, but the appearance of the International stars in the fund raising activities during the war. His friendship with Alec Brook, the International player and Sports Goods proprietor, brought Alec to become the Honorary Adviser to the League, and to play for a while in the Guildford League.

Percy was a sprightly player in his younger days, and even in his later years he graced the occasion of Dai Jones’ Milford Club’s annual event, with an exhibition match with Bill Marriott, using the old vellum lute-shaped bats. Our President was a sentimental man, using the word in its best sense, and he loved the Annual Dinner/Dance which used to be organised at the end of the season. Those occasions were graced with speeches and all Percy’s old friends and acquaintances will remember Percy, when he stood up in front of what he called his children, and expressed the delight he felt at seeing them all.

He was a great help for me in the compilation of this part of the history, and I have delved deeply into his memories of what Guildford was like in the days when he helped to start our whole enterprise. Many of the older players and officials have fond memories of working and playing with him. For us, it is a pity that when he retired Percy left Guildford to put roots down

in Warminster, but we often saw him on such occasions as the Annual General Meetings, and the Presentation Evenings.



Percy Lawes in an exhibition using the original vellum lute shaped bats.

B. Doreen Allison

Miss Allison, as she was generally referred to, was one of the most respected figures in the history of the Association. She began as a player for the Pegasus Club from its inception in the summer of 1951, but soon put aside her bat and settled down to a very long stint as an Officer and a worker, first solely for the Pegasus club, and from 1953 for the parent body.

Doreen was elected to the post of Association Treasurer at the Annual General Meeting of 1953, at the time when George Cannon was Chairman. Next year she moved over to the Secretary's seat, and was continually re-elected to that post, with the exception of one rest year, until the end of the 1965/66 season. She then served as Chairman for three years, before taking up the post of Vice-Chairman, and was appointed Vice-President in that year, which situations she served right up to the time of her death.

Doreen will always be associated, in the minds of all who played matches at the Pegasus club, in the back room of the Star Inn in Quarry Street, with her little nook in a corner of that room. It was here that she took charge of the refreshments, and the seemly conduct of the games, and kept up with her secretarial duties. A lovely and generous person, I remember her always buying drinks for everyone-JRD. She was an assiduous Committee person, and never hesitated to comment or criticise in a constructive way when such action appeared to be necessary. She

was an ever-present personality at the Individual Tournament, generally behind the scenes with the tea urn, and always eager to take her part in whatever the Management Committee was engaged in. Doreen had a lot to do with the growth of the Pegasus club to the largest in the League, and this interest was transferred to the larger premises in Stoughton Road, when the writing was on the wall that the club had grown too big for the Star, and that its availability was coming to an end.

She also served on the County Committee for several years, often in tandem with her old friend Percy Lawes, and it was a great disappointment to her when Guildford's interest in the Inter-League matches began to dwindle.

It was a great shock to her many friends in Table Tennis when, in 1974, her health very quickly gave way and she died on 15th June that year. Doreen Allison played a very large part in maintaining and enlarging the strength of the Guildford Association, particularly in the difficult years in the middle 1950's, and her memory deserves to endure as long as the Association remains part of the life of Guildford. It was with this in mind that the 'Doreen Allison Trophy' was provided for the Handicap Singles Tournament.

Miss Allison' background was something of a mystery. She was a Civil Servant, and there were rumours of a romance some years before, but outside of Table Tennis she was a very private and somewhat lonely person-JRD

C. Susan Howard

Guildford TableTennis' first great individual success was Susan Howard, who rose to the International Standard at both Junior and Senior level. She represented England more than ten times in both categories, and travelled to represent her country in Holland- where she won the Open Singles at the under 16 level- Rumania, and Hungary. She played many times for Surrey at Junior and Senior levels, and won many open tournaments around England, winning the Kent Singles on no less than three occasions. She became England's number one Junior in 1968 at the age of 16, reaching the number six Senior ranking soon after.

Susan was showing talent for lawn tennis when she was 14, and it was a coaching session by Fred Oliver, an excellent tennis instructor and Guildford Table Tennis stalwart, that during a break for rain, she and Fred knocked up on a table tennis table in the pavilion, at the Pit Farm Tennis Club. After a few more such enforced breaks, similarly taken advantage of, Susan began to enjoy Table Tennis more than the outdoor game, and Fred, recognising an outstanding talent in the making, began to coach her on a regular basis at her grandfather's house. She was then passed on to the County coach, Mick Kercher.

It was at about this time that Susan's father, Percy, a generous benefactor to the Association, built a table tennis pavilion of county standard facilities in his back garden, which was to become the venue for countless hours of practice for both Susan, and younger sister Linda.

The facilities were also used, on a regular basis, for Town matches, and Inter-League competitions, and in both the Junior and Senior National Knockout competitions. Susan can remember thinking that she would never be good enough to beat either Christine Raggett, or Susan Light in the Guildford League-she very soon did. And had many a hard struggle with Sandra Goldsmith, before gaining the Number One spot in Surrey.

By the time Susan left the Junior ranks she had won many open tournaments at under 13, under 15, and under 17 at singles, several girls' doubles titles, and mixed doubles tournaments with John Dabin from Kent. Her best achievements in the English Closed Senior Championships were to reach the semi-final, to lose to Jill Shirley, and in doubles to partner Jill and lose in the final to Sister Linda and Karenza Matthews. One of her finest achievements was to win the Commonwealth Ladies' Doubles with Jill Shirley at Cardiff. Her biggest disappointment occurred in the Senior Ladies National Knockout competition, when, after several years' experience of losing in the quarter or semi-final stage to the extraordinarily strong Central London team, Guildford at last broke through to the final, against the Ormesby Club's trio of Carole Moore, Angela Tierney and Barbara Kierney, and lost 5- 4.

Susan remembers the dedication, the hard work and the pressure put on the top players, particularly when in the England squad. There were four residential training camps a year, and a normal one day a week group practice, plus another day a week at Physical Training. It was during these sessions that she met husband to be Colin Henderson -he was the PE instructor for the squad-JRD

She also, of course, has warm recollections of the people who influenced and helped her in her career, beginning with her family, and she recalls particularly the encouragement given by Mick Kercher, Brian and Mary Wright, Laurie Landry and Les Creswell.

The more important tasks of marriage, and the raising of a family, brought her career at the top to an end, but Susan continued for several years to play in the Premier Division of the Guildford League, and, as ever, to show grace, charm, ability and good sportsmanship of a very high standard.



Sue and Linda in Doubles Action

D. Linda Howard

The second great individual success in the History of the Association came into view about three years behind Susan, in the form of her sister, Linda Howard. Linda had the advantage of the example, and the benefit of the encouragement of Susan, at the beginning of her career, and, of course, of her parents, Percy and Joan Howard. Linda began to play in the hut in her father's garden in Burpham, and practised for hours with Susan. When Linda was 11 years old she, and her father, with Ron Stevens, joined the Guildford League in the Sixth Division. It was about this time that many can remember, when this little girl, brought forth a round of applause, when she beat a good Second Division player, in a round of the Individual Championships.

Her early coaching was given, again, by Fred Oliver, and like Susan before her, she was passed over to Mick Kercher, the Surrey Coach, and very rapidly began her rise to fame. She soon began to play for Surrey Juniors, and to gain successes at Tournaments around the country. At the age of 15, she was ranked at Number One Junior in England, as Susan moved from that position into the Senior List. Just before that acknowledgement of her talent, she made her first foray into Europe, when she and Susan, accompanied by their mother as chaperone, travelled to an International Tournament in Holland.

Linda was the key figure in the amazing successes in 1972 and 1973 of the Guildford Junior Girls' team, in winning the National Knockout Tournament for Girls. With Susan, and the hard-hitting Ruth Miles, a purely Guildford side-unlike the 'Cobbled Together' sides that they came up against-JRD-they, so many times, narrowly missed taking the Senior Title in the National Tournament.

In partnership with Susan, and then with Janet Hellaby, she won the English Junior Doubles, and took the Mixed Doubles prize with Simon Heaps. On the larger stage of the European Junior Championships she won the Singles, and teamed up with Desmond Douglas to capture the Senior Mixed Doubles in Athens. Linda was a member of the English squad in all the World Championships from 1972, with the exception of 1979. At the time of the 'World's' in Calcutta, she was ranked Number 12 in Europe – a far cry from the Sixth Division of the Guildford League.

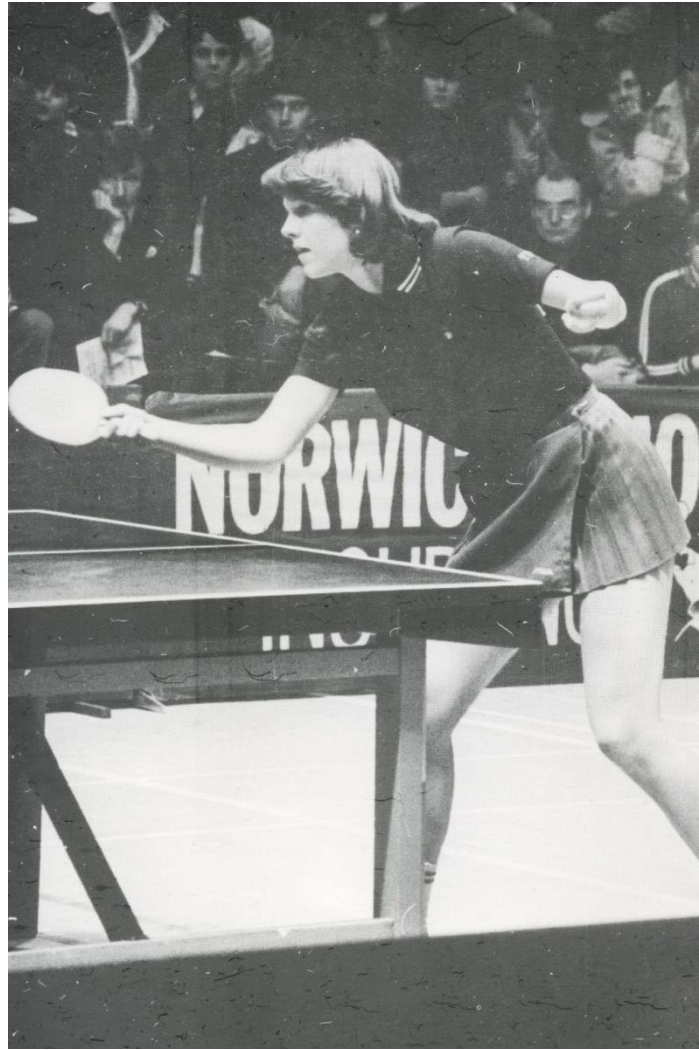
Further success came with victories in both the Ladies Doubles, and the Mixed, at the Melbourne Commonwealth Tournament in 1975, and in teaming up with Jill Parker to win the European Doubles at Duisburg in the following year.

With Desmond Douglas, she became a fixture as the Mixed Pair for England, and, apart from their performances in the European League, they won many tournaments, including the Welsh title in 1978 against Chinese and Hungarian opposition, and the English Open in 1979. In 1980 the pair brought back the Silver Medal from Europe.

Linda won 23 national titles, was England's Number 1 Senior for a spell, and travelled all over Europe and to Australia, India and China. She spent a year playing in the German League for Düsseldorf, and became the first lady to play in the English National League. In China she played at one time in front of 25,000 spectators. Behind all these successes was a life dedicated to the game, to the need for constant practice and intensive training, and the necessity of participation in the top tournaments, and in 1982 Linda decided to retire from the game while at the top.

As a valedictory note to end this record of Linda's prowess at our sport, and to illustrate the vicarious glory brought to the Guildford Association, it is appropriate to mention that in the European League matches for England, Linda first played in 1974/5, and out of 47 mixed doubles she and her partner won 30 of them, and that on nine of those occasions the match was won by England at 4 - 3 with the mixed contribution decisive.

Linda met her husband to be Nicky Jarvis, the English International star, during her time with the National squad. Their son Mathew plays regularly in the Premier football league & is currently being considered for England! -JRD 2013.



Linda on International Duty

E. Trevor Channing

It is with all due respect to the Officers of the Management Committee, who had continued the pioneering work of the Founders of the Association, and to the generation that followed, that, I suggest, it was the advent of Trevor Channing upon the scene, and the drive and enthusiasm which he brought with him which, in parallel with the coaching work of John Diggins and Partners, was largely responsible for changing dramatically, for the better, the spirit, direction, scope and record of achievements of the Association.

Trevor appeared, apparently out of the blue- but in fact upon prompting from Bob Hammond and Bill Marriott- at the Annual General Meeting held at the Star Inn on 28th April 1967. Before that date, in his capacity as a member of the West End Club, he had proposed some amendments to the Rules of the Association for consideration by the A.G.M. It was indicative of his enthusiasm that, although almost every point he suggested was rejected by the meeting, he

volunteered to come in as General Secretary, to follow Bill Marriott's fort-holding in that post. He was, of course, voted into that position, and he held it for over 13 years, not once being challenged for re-election. For a large part of that period he was also General Secretary to the Surrey Committee, and did a spell as County representative to the English Table Tennis Association, and as a member of one of the Sub-committee of that body.

Although the records show that Trevor was the officially appointed Tournament Secretary on two occasions only, he, in fact, made a major contribution to, and took on responsibility for, the running of the Tournament for many years. In that capacity he showed great talent for organisation and thorough preparation, and it was partly through a study of his methods, and a flexible variation of some of his basic ideas, that his successors in that post were able to perform so effectively.

Although he was not alone in his hopes of making Guildford a name to be reckoned with in Table Tennis terms, it was wholly due to his drive, and determination, that Guildford were invited to stage a friendly International against Hungary on 21st November 1969. The decision of the Committee to accept the invitation was a brave one, and a venture into the unknown.

Trevor had expended much time, and typewriter ribbon, in letters to possible sponsors- this was in the days before sponsorship of sport became a common thing. The Association was faced with problems, such as finding accommodation for both teams, arranging transport of players, setting the scene at the Civic Hall, overseeing the arranging of the post-match Mayoral Reception, etc.... For what is considered to be the first International match, in any sport, to be held in Guildford- relying only on the sponsorship of £50 from the Guildford Association- the problems were faced, and overcome by Trevor and the members of the Committee. About 800 spectators turned up, and for the record the Association made a profit of £30.17.1d... Hungary won 4- 3.

Trevor kept our name in front of the E.T.T.A. and kept up the pressure upon possible sponsors with great success. We followed up on 11th February 1971, with a European League match against West Germany. The earlier event had served to show the pitfalls and difficulties which lay in wait, for inexperienced organisers of such major sporting events, and the Association was better placed for putting on a real show on this second occasion. We were greatly assisted by the most generous sponsorship of Imperial Life Assurance of Canada; a grant from the Mayor and Corporation of Guildford towards the cost of the post-match reception; by Supa Sports for the cost of the hire of the hall; the Manor Inn, Farncombe, for the accommodation of the visiting teams and officials, and minor assistance in respect of equipment, drinks, and mementoes by Dunlop Sports, Jacques and Son, Halex Ltd., Coca Cola Ltd., and Marks and Spencer Ltd. All these benefactors joined in, as a result of Trevor's voluminous correspondence and persistence, and, in some cases, personal contact.

The match was a triumph for England who, by winning 5 -2, ensured that they would not be relegated from the Premier Division of the European League. The team was a strong one: Dennis Neale, Chester Barnes, Jill Parker and Karenza Matthews. Germany fielded Eberhard Scholer (runner-up in the recent World Championships), Wilfred Lieck and Di Scholer (nee

Rowe, one of the famous Rowe twins)-*one of the finest matches I have ever seen, especially considering that Barnes and Neale both defeated Scholer-JRD*

The event was also a social and financial success, attracting about 900 spectators. I shall always remember that Doreen Allison, out of the kindness of her heart, at some stage during the match, ushered the Town Clerk into my seat, while I was away for a few seconds. I was not amused. Despite the success, an inquest by the Committee showed that there were still points to be considered on which we could improve, such as a complaint from the German team of the alleged slipperiness of the floor, the sitting of some seats at a point, from which the match could not be seen, and a tightening up of the financial accounting.

These aspects were fully considered when we were negotiating with the E.T.T.A. for a European League match against Sweden. Trevor had continued to search exhaustively for sponsors, and to keep up the pressure on the parent body. His efforts, in conjunction with future committee member, Mike Gorman, brought forth a most generous sponsorship by the Cornhill Insurance Company, and a matching one from the Guildford Corporation, towards the cost of a stately reception. The match was held in the Surrey University Sports Hall, embellished by tiered seating, and in front of a crowd of 1000 spectators. When the players of both sides were introduced to the crowd, by spotlight, playing from a darkened hall, the atmosphere was electric, and in some ways this was the high point of all the activities run by the Association in all its history. The guests of honour were, in no fixed order of precedence, the Vice-Chancellor of the University, the Mayor of Guildford, the General Manager of Cornhill Insurance, the President of the Swedish Table Tennis Association, and the Chinese Ambassador to the United Kingdom.

The match itself did not live up to its surroundings, as England played below par, and let slip a victory which was there for the taking. Only Jill Parker and Karenza Matthews played at their best. The Chinese Ambassador, with a small staff, caused some anxiety from the security point of view (we checked our insurance cover carefully) but very few people noticed the Special Branch in attendance. It was, however, remarked that, although the Chinese Ambassador returned to London immediately after the match was over, at least one of the Special Branch officers attended, uninvited, at the splendid Reception provided by the University Catering staff. There were speeches at the Reception by the Mayor, the General Manager of Cornhill, and an excellent effort by Trevor. Not surprisingly, in all the excitement, Trevor slipped up in his formalities, and was gently chided by the Mayor for not including himself (once Trevor's schoolmaster) in the introduction of Trevor's speech.

Our Association's profit, after the countless hours of sterling preparatory work by Trevor, and the Committee, came to £127.

Trevor continued to strive for the Association, but, during a long period when sufficient amounts of sponsorship on a local basis were no longer forthcoming, his sterling efforts as a labour of love came to naught. Trevor did organise many events, which were not the direct responsibility of the local Association, but to which the Committee and many individuals contributed. He ran the Surrey Closed on a number of occasions, was very proud of his

resurrection of the long forgotten South of England Open, and had a lot to do with the bringing to Woking of the English Closed – or whatever name it was run under.

Trevor believed in keeping the players in the know, and his regular supply of Newsletters to Club Secretaries certainly did that. When we commenced to issue Officers' reports in advance of the Annual General Meetings, Trevor's record of his year's activities heavily outweighed that of his colleagues. In his last few years Trevor had his heart set on a career on the management side of the E.T.T.A., while maintaining his main loyalty to Guildford, and it is fairly certain that his ambition would have been realised. Trevor was a jolly man, an extrovert, a perfectionist, an emotional man; he was sensitive, but, above all, he was enthusiastic.



Trevor Channing – In his Prime!

Trevor died suddenly in August 1980. This came as a staggering loss to the Association and, of course, in a wider field, and there is no question that his departure was felt very keenly by all who knew, and all who had worked with him. I knew Trevor very well; we worked closely together on Committee and at Tournaments, etc., and, although we had many instances when we were not in complete agreement -and even occasions when I had to persuade him that he did not need to resign, or that he had the confidence of his colleagues- we were good friends, and I, like all colleagues, missed him terribly

F. John Diggins and the Coaching Scheme

As previous pages have shown an amount of organised coaching had taken place at several clubs, and on several occasions in the years before the advent of John Diggins upon the local scene. But very soon after John moved to Guildford he began to think about Table Tennis in a larger context than the Local League, and the Surrey Inter League competitions.

John joined the Management Committee, for the 1967/8 season, as Press Officer. John had noticed that the average age of the players in the League, including most of the top players, came out to a figure at which most football players would have hung up their boots and that, while young people were joining the game, very little superior talent was emerging. Paradoxically, this objective look at the scope of the Association's endeavours came at a time when total participation in the League began its expansion – from 103 teams in 1966/7 to 142 in 1972/3. John commenced with a small scale endeavour on two tables at the Pegasus club and spent a lot of time in search of a venue with much better facilities

The initial small scale endeavour included Alan & Rosemary Wilkinson, off spring of Vera & Harry Wilkinson mentioned earlier in these pages. ***However, I found out just recently that a friend of the family who attended sessions regularly was future award winning novelist Kazuo Ishiguro-he wrote 'Remains of the Day' which won him the Booker prize & was made into the film starring Antony Hopkins & Emma Thompson. JRD2013***

Thanks to the assistance from several players, the Youth Officer, the Corporation, and others, the use of the Bellfields Youth Centre was obtained- ***Fred Drinkwater was the Man mainly responsible for securing these perfect, for us, premises-JRD***. From 1970 the Scheme eventually set off. The Scheme was established under the overall responsibility and control of the Management Committee of the Association, which, when satisfied that the Scheme was in good hands, gave almost autonomous authority to John, and his colleagues, to press ahead on their own initiatives. John was fortunate to have as Senior Colleagues Ted Woodgate and Dennis Baggott, who all worked at a degree of dedication, and sense of commitment, beyond tangible recognition

Curiously enough the first real success from organised coaching was 1970/71/72 fom the Cranleigh stable run by Derek Rust with chopper Dennis Corbett winning the Junior Boys twice. I suppose Chris Bennett was the first from the Bellfields Scheme to show real talent for the game just before the Simon Vine era! I played with Chris & Simon in the Second Division in the 1973 season before they became Premier Stars We got runners up spot. -JRD 2013

It was not unnatural to miss the assistance of some of the proud fathers who helped their offspring through the span of the scheme, and then faded from the scene. Other came along to take their place, and there were too many to fairly highlight as kingpins of the backup team to John, Ted and Dennis. ***-John Oakley and Tom Harden certainly were! -JRD***

Over 40 girls and boys formed the first set of learners and before long a maximum number of fifty was set, and a waiting list was prepared. A limited amount of success soon became apparent with individual successes at the younger level in Surrey County tournaments, and Ranking Lists. In June 1971 the first 'Scheme Finals and Awards Day' was held at Bellfields, with the playing talent, and the table of Trophies donated by many individuals and clubs, on

display, together with the presence of about 100 spectators. This became an annual event, and the free space on the awards table came to be smaller and smaller. The finals were a test of character for the players, and it was always agreeable to see both the delight of the winners and the masking of chagrin by the losers. Emotion did play its part on occasions, but were not English Champions sometimes seen in tearful display? I was sometimes called on, in the absence of any visiting dignitaries, to hand over the Trophies, and I lost count of the number of times I shook hands with, for example, Jayne Mitchell Suzanne Roebuck, Diane Elliott, Kim and Kerry Merritt, Simon Vine, Mark Oakley, Peter Tuffs, Glenn Baker et al....

John's ambition to put Guildford on the Table Tennis map was realised, in spectacular fashion, on 7th May 1972. Guildford had fought through a number of rounds of the National Bromfield Trophy for Junior Girls, with a squad of Guildford League players headed by Linda Howard, then England's Number 1 Junior, and Nicolette Leslie -number 17- supported by Lynne Dowle and Nina Webb. After some narrow victories, particularly in the earlier rounds when Linda was unavailable ***-I remember a 5-4 result against Reading when Nina got us through, in a last gasp victory, at deuce in the third against their number three-JRD-*** and not a little travelling, the girls got through to the final, and on that named day went by coach, and well-supported, to Birmingham to meet the pick of Liverpool. The match itself developed to the stage that, with the ninth set almost certain to go to Liverpool, we were 4 – 3 up with Nicolette to play Brenda Williams, on paper a tough proposition.

Nicolette, aged 15, lost the first game at 14, took the second at 19 after being well down. In the third she was five points behind, but came back to lead at 20 – 18. The supporters could hardly breathe as Brenda crept back to 20 – 20, but were able to deflate their lungs when, at 23 – 24 down, Brenda returned one into the net, and Guildford had won the National Title-***Mick Kercher was, thankfully, appointed team captain by me for the day, a very wise choice on my part I believe-JRD.*** Champagne was brought by Nicolette's father on the way home, and it tasted good!!

A repeat performance was given the next year, the last for Linda as a junior, at Harlow against Cheshunt. Diane Elliott replacing Lynne Dowle- with great backup from Jayne Mitchell in the earlier rounds –. That second triumph was the end of our successes in the National Junior arena at this time, ***although we progressed to the quarters on numerous occasions, and the semis once –JRD***



Elliott Kercher Mitchell Leslie Diggins Howard

National Champions 1972/73



Jayne Mitchell with the Bromfield Trophy

Individuals continued to do well at County level, and in Open Tournaments, both in the United Kingdom and abroad. A token list of successes is given in the following pages.

In the more permanent context, the Coaching Scheme played a large part in the increase in both the playing numbers-to a peak of 160 teams in 1978/9- and the playing strength, and it was not long before some of the top senior players began to be staggered by the speed and expertise of some 4ft 6in individual at the other end of the table. One pleasant consequence of the success of the Scheme was the production of a generation of players who joined their fathers, and/or mothers, in the League, and it was commonplace for brothers and sisters or father and son or daughter to appear in the same team, or even as opponents from other clubs.

The Roll of Honour in the records of the Guildford Tournament began to reflect the existence of the Scheme, when Nicolette Leslie became the Ladies' Champion in 1972 and 1973, and was followed by eight wins by either Jayne Packington (nee Mitchell) or Suzanne Webb (nee Roebuck) In 1975/6 Simon Vine took the Men's Championship- the first junior to do so, and in later years Stephen Woodgate and Mark Oakley took their turns.

In 1983, with Dennis Baggott no longer in the controlling trio, both John Diggens and Ted Woodgate found that thirteen continuous years at the task was enough, and decided to take a

more than well earned rest, giving in their resignations to take effect from the 1983 Annual General Meeting.

Coaching Scheme Some Records:

- 1971 Guildford Youth Tournament. Stephen Woodgate, aged 8, reached semi-finals of Boys' and Open Singles.
- 1972 Girls win National Bromfield Trophy.
Nicolette Leslie No.17 in England Junior Rankings
- 1973 Girls retain Bromfield Trophy
Nicolette Leslie Number 8 in England Junior Rankings
Five girls in Surrey top ten.
Jayne Mitchell Number 1 in Surrey at Under 14.
Suzanne Roebuck Number 1 in Surrey at Under 13.
- 1974 County Championships. Mark Oakley, aged 9, won Under 11 boys & Suzanne Roebuck aged 14, won under 15 girls.
Bromfield Trophy. Lost in quarter-final to Bournemouth with team of Nicolette Leslie, Jayne Mitchell, Dianne Elliott and Suzanne Roebuck.
Jayne Mitchell ranked in England's top 20 juniors, and reached final of Under 17 singles at Newbury Open.
Mark Oakley, aged 10, reached final of Under 11 at Reading Open.
Surrey Junior team included Simon Vine, Suzanne Roebuck and Jayne Mitchell.
- 1975 Surrey rankings:
- Boys: Under 17 Simon Vine No. 6
Under 16 Simon Vine, Peter Tuffs
Under 15 Nicholas Crossley, Stephen Woodgate
Under 14 Stephen Woodgate, Mark Oakley, Stephen Baggott, Russell Taylor, David Oakley, Colin Willimott, Timothy Vine and Mark Seymour.
- Girls: Under 17 Jayne Mitchell, Suzanne Roebuck, Diane Elliott and Suzanne Cudden.
Under 16 Jayne Mitchell Suzanne Roebuck and Suzanne Cudden.
Under 15 Suzanne Roebuck, Kim Merritt, Karen Gosling, Kerry Merritt, Sarah Cresswell, Anne Mitchell, Allison Hayter and Michelle Bland.
- County Championships:
Under 15 Girls Winner Suzanne Roebuck
Under 13 Boys Winner Mark Oakley
Under 11 Boys Winner Mark Oakley
Under 13 Girls Michelle Bland

National Under 14 Team Competitions at Reading;
Silver Medals in both Boys and Girls events.

International honours for Jayne Mitchell and Stephen Woodgate who represented England Schools against Scotland.

Mark Oakley won Essex Open Boys under 12.

Suzanne Roebuck played for Surrey Junior first team.

1976 Surrey Championships:

Under 17 Girls Winner Jayne Mitchell

Under 14 Boys Winner Stephen Woodgate

Under 12 Boys Winner Mark Oakley

International Schools team against Scotland- Sarah Cresswell and Stephen Woodgate.

Guildford Tournament:

Men's Singles Winner – Simon Vine

Newbury Open- Under 12 Winner – Sarah Cresswell

Essex Open- Under 12 Winner – Sarah Cresswell

National Under 12 Team Competitions at Reading.- Gold Medal



Gold Medals for the Boys!

Ted Woodgate John Oakley John Diggins Tony Russell

Stephen Gosling Mark Oakley Graham Russell Tim Vine

1977 Bromfield Trophy. Lost in semi-final to Reading. Team – Suzanne Roebuck, Sarah Cresswell and Kerry Merritt.

Surrey Championships

Under 14 Boys Winner Mark Oakley

Under 12 Boys Winner Graham Russell

Under 12 Girls Winner Sarah Cresswell

1978 Mark Oakley – England Cadet Ranking No. 2 in English team in Barcelona.

Newbury Open. Under 14 Girls Winner – Sarah Cresswell

English Junior Rankings

Under 17 Mark Oakley at No. 15

Under 14 Sarah Cresswell at No. 5

Under 14 Graham Russell at No. 10



Recognise Any of These?



Stephen Woodgate- First of the First!

/



Kerry Merrit-Perfection!!!



Diggins

Woodgate

Baggott

Coaching Scheme Pioneers and Leaders



The Marvellous Glen Baker!



Coaching Scheme in its Heyday



Seventies Coaching Scheme Everyone for Table Tennis !



Kerry Merritt Ann Drinkwater Allison Hayter Kim Merritt

***1977 Bishop Reindorp School- Runners Up National U18 Team
Competition***

UPDATE 2013

This year I got an email after 45 years from Peter Tuffs one of my old boys from the coaching scheme, son of Wally who was manager of Jeffreys Sports for many years. Now you have to remember that this part of the History was nothing to do with me except for a few additions subsequently made, so some detail was left out. Now a few tit bits for your information concerning the Tuffs family including some photos.

Peter become a very accomplished player and reminded me of the time when at 17 years old he played in the Premier for Pegasus against Burpham at the Howards facilities in their back garden. He beat Sue & Colin Henderson & only lost to Jimmy Moore deuce in the third. Jimmy was Guildford Champion at the time, a considerable performance. I do remember it at the time- a pity it got left out of Ted's Part!!

He remembers growing up (10 to 18 years old) with the 70's coaching scheme & his rivalry with Simon Vine. In fact his first league experience age 10 was playing with Simon & Steve Woodgate.

Below are three photos firstly showing a slightly balding John Diggins, my wife says I look a lot better now at 77, presenting a very youthful Peter Tuffs with the U14 trophy? Peter actually beat arch rival Simon Vine in this particular competition.

Secondly members of the Pegasus club with their trophies from the annual Association competitions- Can you name them all?

Lastly Wally Tuffs with Jeffreys MD Don Eadie & England International Dennis Neal.





Chapter 5 1967-74

We now began the period of rapid expansion of our activities, some of which are dealt with in detail in the parts of Chapter 4, dealing with the work of Trevor Channing and John Diggens. In the 1967/8 Season Enterprise won both the Premier Division title, and the Percy Lawes Cup, but it was to be the last occasion on which that long triumphant club headed the roll of honour. New clubs were finding new stars, and this year saw Susan Howard take the Ladies' and the Junior Individual Championships, and the first mention of College Hill, when they snatched the Handicap Knockout Cup. On the administrative side, John Diggens commenced a three-year spell as Press Secretary, and Jim Stark took over from John Haskins as Treasurer. One welcome innovation was the scrapping of the old practice of deciding the formation of the Divisions by a Special General Meeting, a procedure which had become a shambles as the years rolled by. Authority was given to the Management Committee to sort out this problem and for the first few years the Match Secretary assisted, where required, by a couple of Committee members, proposed the formation, and the main Committee endorsed and/or amended the proposals. With 112 teams to be sorted according to the previous season's record, and the wishes of the clubs, this was a difficult task, and caused a few headaches, until practice made almost perfect. In later years, even when in 1978/9 the strength of the league rose to 160 teams, John Pullen was able to present his suggested format to the scrutiny of the Committee, and have his suggestions rapidly endorsed.

In the 1968/9 season, following the Annual General Meeting at the Stoke Hotel, the old system of two points for a win was scrapped and we commenced the current method of earning a point for every set won. I was delighted with this change, which I considered gave all players more to fight for in every match, and, despite reluctant acceptance by some players, it has only been challenged at Rule Changes on one occasion, and then without success. Other signs of the times changing were: an entry into the National Ladies Cup competition; nine clubs being fined £1 for non-attendance at the Annual General Meeting; and the appointment of a Cup Steward to look after our noble array of Trophies-to collect them, polish them, and arrange their display on the occasion of the annual presentation. The Association responded to a call from the Hard of Hearing Club, and put on a display of exhibition matches and friendly games for them.

Our entry to the National Ladies Cup could only just have been more auspicious, as the trio of Susan, Linda, and the girl with the mighty forehand, Ruth Miles, reached the semi-final at the first attempt.

The new rule, brought in by Trevor Channing, of a fine for non-attendance at the Annual General Meeting, sadly, brought resentment from the Dowdeswell's club, who refused to pay the fine. Eventually they were refused admission to the League, upon which decision they asked for a payment of £1.10s. for repayment of refreshment costs in respect of a Knockout Cup final they had hosted. The Committee paid the sum requested, and Dowdeswells returned it as a donation to the general fund. So all ended happily.

Another contemporary note shows that the Committee received a letter from a Mr. Jack Dawson, of the Godalming Cricket Club, concerning what he described as the too slapdash attitude adopted by many clubs, to punctuality and equipment. The letter was appropriately dealt with, and thirteen years later Jack became our General Secretary.

In 1969/70 Ash became the top team of the 132 in the League, College Hill won the Percy Lawes trophy, and their local boy from Yugoslavia, Shanta Santic, won the Men's' Singles in a whirlwind fashion. At the Annual General Meeting, to herald the new season, Ken Readman was congratulated for having organised the Town team to a pitch that they had won both the Percy Johnson and the Arthur Williams Rosebowl. Ripley club was reprimanded for their record of giving six walkovers, and the Friary club was congratulated on having completed their fixtures, despite losing their premises in that year's flood. It was at this year's Committee meeting, to set up the League Divisions that the decision was narrowly taken to deny the University their rightful place in the Premier Division, and to give it to Burpham's team of triumphant ladies. The other decision was to form a First Division South and North- what a mess that made of things for a while!

Barry Vine appeared on the major scene as Fines Secretary, and suddenly the Committee meetings started to spin out until near midnight. Barry caused great amusement when he complained about Newlands fielding a reserve from the Seventh Division against his team "Who was the best player he had ever seen" This phantom star turned out to be Alan Howling, who would never have regarded himself as more than a fair Second Division player, and was most amused when he heard the story. We advised the new Sports Centre on Table Tennis matters at this time, and we put on a County game against Middlesex at the friendly premises of Peperharow School. Records show that we complained to the Surrey Committee about the behaviour of the Surrey team at that match, and received the reply to the effect- that the other team was just as bad. The year's Tournament provided Bob Hammond with 682 matches to be played over three days from Friday to Sunday.

The Annual Dinner Dance in 1970, held at the Manor Inn at Farncombe, was attended by 194. This was organised by Trevor Channing and a sub-committee. Doreen Allison polished the trophies, and set out a glittering array of pots, etc. for presentation by various dignitaries.

In preparation for the 1970/1 season, the Committee was persuaded, by a few of us, that the Rules needed tightening up, and a Special General Meeting was called to the Old Guildfordian's pavilion to debate the proposals put forward. The meeting dragged on until 12.15 a.m. but, despite long procedural arguments from the floor, most of the suggestions were adopted, and the remainder were dealt with at the succeeding Annual General Meeting.

Tony Ford, of the Merrow club, proposed that a friendly Summer League should be run on a handicap basis, and so began that very pleasant summer exercise, which does so much to keep oiled the muscles of some of the more ancient of our players, and give general enjoyment to a fairly good number of the winter strugglers.

The season of 1970/1 saw even more changes, with Stephen Pinn bringing his journalistic talents into play as Press Secretary at the beginning of a three-year stint, and Trevor Channing celebrated the adoption of his brainchild, the Pairs Handicap Tournament, by christening it at the Youth Centre in midwinter. This competition, essentially a light-hearted affair, became a regular winter occasion and grew even more popular when a Handicap Singles event was twinned with it at a later stage. On the coaching front, the Bellfields Scheme was officially opened on 27th September with 47 trainees, 8 tables, 15 names on the waiting list and **John**

Diggens, Dennis Baggott, Ray Ody, Ted Woodgate, Bob Bradstreet and Alan Thornton as qualified Club Coaches. A little later John, Ted, and Dennis were awarded 'Diploma' status by the ETTA, as befitted a coaching scheme of our size and standing.

Cliff Keen beat Tony Miller in the League, to inflict Tony's first defeat in three and a half years, Guildford won the Percy Johnson Cup, again, and Linda Howard was photographed for the National Press standing on the Great Wall of China. The University teams were in some disgrace through a careless attitude to meeting their fixtures. This was a disappointing development in the light of their good record up to that date. This was the year when the sheer size of the Association forced us to desert the friendly atmosphere of Dennis' and move the Individual Tournament to the Sports Hall at the University.

A new power was implemented by the Management Committee, when they suspended a couple of players who had changed clubs, without first clearing their arrears of subscriptions to their first club.

Ash had rather a good season winning the Premier Division, the Percy Lawes, and Handicap Cups. Terry Bruce taking the Men's Singles. John Oakley made his mark, by lifting the Veterans' Cup.

1971/2 saw more changes with West End winning the Percy Lawes, and David Wellsman blasting his way through to win the Individual trophy. Nicolette Leslie won the Ladies Singles, and Ro De La Haye the Veterans. Ian Farley looked after the Knockout Cups, and Barry Vine developed his mathematical talents in manipulation of the figures, for progressing the Handicap Cup contests. The Annual General Meeting had approved the idea of an early season Buffet Dance, but the event was such a ghastly flop that Trevor Channing, whose idea it was, and who worked hard to christen it, felt that he ought to resign. He did not do so after advice from his colleagues. We staged the Nissen Top Ten Tournament at the Sports Centre, and made the first profit in the history of that event. Not all was prospering however.

In the year which saw our Girls' team win the National Junior competition, by beating Liverpool in Birmingham, and Surrey beating Glamorgan at Bellfields Youth Centre, apathy enveloped the Inter Town scene, and we were forced to withdraw from two of the competitions. John Diggens saved our face, to some extent, by undertaking to run teams of up and coming juniors in the Second Division of the Percy Johnson league, and in the Rosebowl. No one could be found to take on the job of Town Match Secretary after John finished that task, and Guildford literally opted out of the Inter League organisations. Two of our stalwarts died in that year.

Evelyn Hedger, one of the delightful trio of Enterprise ladies, with Pat Fry and Betty Forrest, was killed in a traffic accident, and Les Parker, the key man for so long at Guildford Wednesday passed away. Percy Lawes retired from work and moved away to Wiltshire, but happily continued to keep in contact, and pay us regular visits in his double capacity of President and Friend.

The Coaching Scheme continued to expand, and coaching certificates were won by Ron Roebuck, Ian Farley, Graham Vaughan and Derek Rust. The mention of Ian Farley, and Graham Vaughan, reminds me of a telephone call in 1967 from one of the Chilworth lads, enquiring about joining the league, and asking if they could be admitted, even though their matches would have to be over by 9.00 p.m. so that they could get to bed on time.

Let us stop and have a look at our position at the commencement of the 1972/3 season. There were 142 teams, in 42 clubs, playing across 12 Divisions. This meant that John Pullen, who had taken over the post of Match Secretary, was receiving an average of 71 score cards a week to absorb into his record, and about 420 players were engaged in battle each week of the season of 22 playing weeks. Steve Pinn, as Press Secretary, had to collect these result cards, and convert the information contained therein into a readable summary, for presentation to the local press, designed to inform our members and all their sisters, their cousins, and their aunts.

Ian Farley was heavily engaged in organising the various Knock-Out Cup championships, and Barry Vine was still dazzling teams with his handicapping system. In the other running competition, I was in the chair at meetings where, apart from the officers, I was supposed to keep in order the committee consisting of Jim Stark, John Diggins, Gloria Wragge, Ken Readman, Peter Palmer, Brian Bawden and Sheila Webb.

Of the 42 clubs then present, the following have slipped away: Barclays Bank, Brewers, Chilworth, Drummonds, Elgin, Elstead, Elstream, Enterprise, Godalming Cricket, Guildford Wednesday, Lightwater, National Westminster Bank, Newlands, Plastic Coatings, Shamley Green, Surrey University and Westborough Congregationalists- but happily have been replaced by almost as many new clubs.

Of the secretaries then looking after clubs, the following have soldiered on to through the golden jubilee year- Jean West of Burpham, Mick Garland of College Hill, Peter Bridger of Guildway, Jim Stark of Imperial Life, Colin Browne of St. Lukes, and Colin Webber of Shalford Services.

The handbook, produced to time as usual, by Bob Hammond, advertised: The Handicap Pairs Tournament at Dennis Canteen, a County match versus Yorkshire at Bellfields, and the Surrey Closed Championships at the University, plus our own Championships at the same venue. This together with the Annual Dinner/Dance at the Bisley Pavilion. At the last mentioned event, the Master of Ceremonies, Barry Vine, announced, amongst other things, that Aldershot had drawn away at Stockport and so gained promotion to Division 3 of the Football League. In that Season we staged the Sweden match, the third of the Internationals down to Guildford's high

reputation, and a little later we turned down an invitation to host a match against Japan, unless we could be guaranteed that Linda Howard would be included in the side in her home town.



Management Commitment 1970

***Tony Ford, Ken Readman, Trevor Channing, Bob Hammond, Sheila Webb, Mick Garland,
Ted Simpkin, John Diggins, Percy Lawes, Mick Noble, Sandra Creech Doreen Allison,
Graham Vaughan, Barry Vine.***

We had arranged to stage the National under 13 singles tournament at Dennis', and, in an attempt at further expansion, we wrote to all the local Parish Councils inviting participation in our League. Only Worplesdon, Ripley and East Clandon replied, and nothing came out of the experiment.

There were more new names on the honours list at the end of the 1973/4 season. David Wellsman took over as Champion from Jimmy Moore, and helped West End to win both the Premier Division and the Percy Lawes Trophy. Jayne Mitchell won the Ladies' Singles, Paul Brook the Veterans' and Burpham won the first of their three and a half successes in the Handicap Cup. The averages in the spring of 1974 gave the first five places in the Premier Division to: Dave Wellsman, Jimmy Moore, Chris Harper, Bob Bradstreet and Dave Crowley. Susan Howard finished a good eighth, with a 71% record. Bottom of the list was Bill Marriott. John Diggins headed the First Division with 89%. Stephen Conquest had 98% in the Second Division. John Bish was less successful in the Second with 5%. Jayne Mitchell had 89% in the Third Division, Ted Simpkin stood at 61%, ahead of his team mates, and Fred Drinkwater came bottom with 14%. Fred Pratt headed the Fifth Division with 96%. Stephen Woodgate had 92% and Sue Roebuck 83% in the Sixth and was soon to leap to the top of the tree.

The 1973/4 season saw the introduction of Janet Guess and John Oakley to the administrative scene: Janet, starting humbly as Minute Secretary on the retirement of the most efficient Sheila Webb, and John Oakley at the start of six years as Press Secretary. The University was allowed only one team in the League because of its appalling record of unplayed fixtures. The Committee rejected the offer of an International against Russia, unless it was to be a European League match. There was a most remarkable game in the Premier Division when Paul Brook of Pegasus was a game down at 20 – 22 and stood at 0 – 15 to Ray Thornton of College Hill, but came back from the dead to take that game 22 – 20 and win the third 21 – 15

CHAPTER 6 1974 – 1982

The Association's fifth decade began on a very low note with the death of Doreen Allison on 14th June 1974. About thirty Table Tennis people attended the ceremony at Woking Crematorium.

The season saw the almost complete break with the County Inter League competitions. No one could be found willing to take on the job of Town Match Secretary, and our only remaining link with that scene, which we had graced for so many years, was the continuance of a junior interest under the control of John Diggins. Guildford was not completely to blame for the lack of interest in that wider scene, as the County Committee had not actually sparkled with efficiency over the matter.

The Handicap Pairs competition was that year pooled with the Handicap Singles event, set up in memory of Doreen Allison, and for the first time we used the University premises for the occasion. The arrangement was made for the Individual Tournaments to be played on the Coaching Schemes tables, thus eliminating the burden of hiring tables on a commercial basis.

We were again offered an International Match, a full European encounter, but, despite a tremendous amount of energy expended by Trevor Channing in attempts to find a sponsor, he received no offers, and we had to turn down the invitation. Bill Marriott came on the Committee in 1974/5, and his suggestion of a Certificate for Divisional Winners was adopted, and later extended to cover Runners-Up, and at the prompting of Colin Woolmington, the most successful player in each Division.

It was Burpham's year, winning the Premier Division, the Percy Lawes Cup, and the Handicap Cup. Dave Wellsman again took the Open Singles, and it was Sue Roebucks turn to pip Jayne Mitchell for the Ladies' title. At the tournament John Diggins suffered the first of two serious heart attacks, and was out of action for some considerable time. Fortunately, for John, after brilliant work by the surgeons, he made a complete recovery. His commitment was very ably taken over by Ted Woodgate and Partners, and the Coaching Scheme continued to progress. The end of that season was the final disappointment for the marvellous trio of young ladies, Susan, Linda and Ruth, when, after reaching the final of the National Team competition for the first time, they went down to the strong Ormesby side by 5 – 4. The girls retired from the competition from that time.

Dai Jones, who performed valiant work outside the Bellfields Coaching Scheme, organised an exhibition at his Milford Youth Club in a very entertaining fashion, and sent all the proceeds to the fund set up to assist with the staging of the World Championships in Birmingham in 1977. A total of £173.10s went from Guildford to that fund.

The Annual General Meeting of 22nd May 1975 re-elected all the serving officers, and had the good sense to accept Jack Dawson as a Committee member. Janet Guess ran the Summer League that year. The Management Committee set up a sub-committee, deliberately including two new members of the main committee as well as Janet representing young persons, to

consider and make recommendations for reawakening the Association. The main thrust of the sub-committee thoughts: To split the junior events from the rest, at the Annual Tournament, to experiment with the use of Broadwater School over two weekends, separated by a month, to bring in a Hard Bat event, and to recruit John Oakley as an extrovert M.C. at the tournament. They were all adopted.

The season commenced with 150 teams in thirteen Divisions, with Steve Woodgate as the youngest ever player in the Premier Division, and with Mark Oakley in the First Division at age 11. Dai Jones set up a coaching scheme at Farncombe Youth Club, and seven players in the First Division had moved up from the coaching school. Peter Bridger did a marvellous job of renovating all the tables in time for the Annual Tournament. Amongst other things, the Management Committee organised a Dinner/Dance to be held at Messrs. Dagenham's, and dealt with a complaint about the use of unacceptable language by a player, with the issue of a strong reprimand. Trevor Channing and Jimmy Anderson became National Umpires and John Diggins began coaching senior players on summer evenings.

Burpham repeated their previous year's successes in league and cup, and Jayne Mitchell retrieved her ladies' title. Simon Vine became the youngest ever Open Singles winner.

The season 1976/7 began with a slight fall-off in the number of competing teams, and some changes in the top places, with Pegasus coming back to lead the Premier Division, Abinger winning the Percy Lawes Cup, David Hannah, to become Scotland's No.1, winning the Open Singles, and Paul Brook emerging as top veteran, with the first of three wins. If there was a 'Man of the Season' it must have been Trevor Seymour- who was awarded his Coaching Certificate- organising a training scheme at George Abbott School, but, above all, so organised the handicapping through every round of that Knockout Cup that the final, between Peperharow and Burpham, ended in a tie.

In the summer of 1976 the Coaching Scheme played a large part in our contribution to the Festival of Godalming, and John Oakley proved once again to be an excellent master of Ceremonies, in compering our contribution. Donations to the Scheme were still required, and amongst the funders were Godalming Cricket, West End, Enterprise and Pegasus clubs. John Diggins enhanced the sartorial elegance of the pupils by producing a 'Guildford Badge' to be worn on the shirts of all so qualified. Trevor Channing helped with the organisation of the 'English Closed Championships' at Woking Leisure Centre, and several Guildford Committee members and players lent a hand for the occasion. Trevor had been very keen to bring this event to the Guildford area, and zealot as he was, he felt rather sad that the enthusiasm that he felt was shared by only a small number from our ranks. Janet Guess moved up that year to take on the organisation of the Knockout Cup competitions, for the first of six successive stints. Mick Gorman came forward to run the Individual Tournaments, and he set a new standard of efficiency in every aspect of the organisation of that event.

1977/8 began with the Annual General Meeting rejecting a change in the points system and an emphatic endorsement of the point per set formula, rather than the idea of four points for victories at 10- 0, 9- 1, 8- 2, three points for 7- 3 and 6- 4 and two points for a draw. We were

complimented by Southampton League for “The excellence of our Handbook” but the “our” really meant Bob Hammond, who for so long had been responsible for the preparation and production of this book, and, fortunately, continues to do so.



Management Committee 1972

*Brian Harris Bob Hammond Mike Garland Trevor Channing Sheila Webb Percy Lawes Ken Readman Doreen Alison
Alan Good Sandra Creech Mick Noble Ted Simpkin John Diggins*

The Coaching Scheme had been running so efficiently, and for sufficient time, for the fruits to begin to show. That season saw nine 'juniors' and twelve ex-juniors, playing regularly in the Premier Division. Two changes were made in respect of the Individual Championships – we returned to the University, after two experiments at Broadwater School. Glenn Baker, another rising star, partnered the arch defender, Cliff Keen, to the Doubles title. Kerry Merritt took the Ladies Singles, breaking up the Mitchell/Roebuck successes

As the entries for the junior section of the Championships were becoming so large, it was held separately at Bellfields, over a three-day period. Mark Oakley won the Boys' Singles, and Sarah Cresswell the Girls'.

1978/9 was the peak year for the strength of the League. 160 teams spread across fourteen Divisions. That meant an average of eighty matches a week, or thirteen contests every week night, and a lot of hard work for John Pullen to control as Match Secretary. With this went a great deal of news material for John Oakley to call on, for his weekly coverage in the Surrey Advertiser.

Pegasus celebrated with victories across the board: Premier Division, Percy Lawes Cup, Handicap Cup, and Stephen Woodgate- Individual Open Champion, Sue Roebuck as Ladies' holder, Glenn Baker and Sarah Cresswell as junior winners – all from the Stoughton Road club.

There was a slight drop in numbers in the next season and a few other changes took place. The Annual General Meeting, to herald in 1979/80, produced Alan Cram, to take over from John Oakley as Press Secretary and, rather surprisingly, an increase in the League Affiliation Fee from £7 to £10 was approved by a fair majority.

This was to be the first year for the award of the Sportsmanship Trophy, a cup donated by Lloyds Bank and the Weyburn club in memory of Peter Edwards, one of the Weyburn players. This trophy was awarded to Paul Brook on its initiation.

Performance certificates, for the most meritorious performance for the season were introduced, in respect of all Divisions. One effort which did not turn out as successfully as other Committee ideas was the introduction of a computer-produced Ranking List, and the experiment died a natural death before very long. The committee were forced to take strong action on two matters. A sub-committee was set up to look into the matter of apparently loose control of expenditure, and this proposal, and its implementation, very soon produced a dramatic reduction in such expenditure, and a much healthier balance in the account. The second matter concerned the Technical College club, and their murky standard of lighting. A 'threat' of expulsion, unless the lights were brought up to standard was effective and, happily, the Tech was permitted to carry on. Keith Please continued to retrieve for what appeared to be hours on end, in much more favourable conditions.

The season ended on somewhat of a low note, when the Presentation Evening, the occasion for an element of formality and enjoyment surrounding the presentation of the glittering prizes, was held at the Civic Hall. In relation to the general high standards of Association functions

this was a semi-disastrous flop. We learnt from this experience and later Presentation Evenings were successful and enjoyable.

1980/1 was the year when Table Tennis enthusiasm began to falter nationally, when the numbers of players showed an alarming decrease. There appeared to be various reasons for this disappointing trend, not least of which was the change in the game itself, brought about by the variety of bat surfaces on the market, which led to a loss of spectacle, and therefore appeal to an audience. The economic recession played its part, as did the competition from badminton, squash and golf, and the lack of appeal for T.V. coverage. Guildford experienced the downward trend, but not to the level of most Associations. 143 teams played in the local league, a figure higher than three years earlier. We were down to twelve Divisions, which eased the burden on the Match Secretary John Pullen, but competition remained fierce. It was Abinger's best year, with victories as Premier Division champions and Percy Lawes Cup winners. Ramesh Bhalla won the Open Singles, and Suzanne Roebuck took the Ladies' title for the third successive time.

Fred Drinkwater took over the Treasurer's books, and John Risebrow and Mick Strobe were welcome newcomers to the Management Committee. This was also the year in which we lost Trevor Channing, whose contribution to our history is set out in Chapter 5. Bob Hammond stepped in to deal with publicity, but did not receive the expected coverage by the local paper despite his dedication to the task. At the Annual General Meeting, to commence that season, there was an amazing decision by the members to maintain the registration fee at its then level, despite the retiring Management Committee's recommendation to cut it by £2 a team. After a break of some years the Committee took part in the E.T.T.A.'s Lincoln Lottery, and the effort resulted in a profit of £20 to the Association, and a return of £160 to the clubs which sold tickets. John Pullen was named as 'Sportsman of the Year'.

In the following season Janet Guess organised both the Individual Tournament, and the Knockout Cup competitions, John Risebrow dealt efficiently with the Handicap Cup contests, and amongst other worthy entrants to the Management Committee were Mick Walker, Alan Sherwin and Chris Lewis. Jack Dawson took over as General Secretary and brought his calm authority and wry humour to that task. Our strength in numbers was reduced to 132 teams over eleven Divisions, a drop to the levels of 1968/9, but compared to the decline nationally, we were still doing well. The competition was greatly strengthened by the N.G.T.E club from Pyestock, whose premises on a dark night seemed to be situated in the depth of darkest Hampshire. Mark Oakley won the Open Singles, only four years after taking the Junior Singles, and Barbara Clark, highly ranked in Hampshire, was top lady. Dave Crowley, winner of the junior title in 1955/6, became veterans' champion in 1981/2, squeezing in the Open Singles Trophy in 1958/9.

I spent a difficult year as Press Secretary, as coverage was mangled and cut about for most of the time. A strong letter of protest brought about some improvement, and better times were ahead on that aspect of the Association's work. Other difficulties were in view. The Coaching Scheme had begun to shrink, and the founders of that enterprise were commencing to feel the

strain of so much hard work over such a long period. There is a note in the Committee minutes that a complaint of bad behaviour, by a player, had been dealt with by a strong reprimand.

There had been very few matters of this nature brought, officially, to the attention of the Committee over the years, but there were some, and they were resolved in a confidential way. There had been a case in the 1950s, when a player had been expelled from the League for unacceptable conduct, but it was a unique occasion. On the credit side, John Risebrow organised an excellent Presentation Evening at Dennis Canteen. On display was a shining assembly of trophies of all shapes, sizes and vintage, all polished to a dazzling degree by Alan Sherwin. Amongst recipients to shake hands with the Mayor was Phil Walker, the 'Sportsman of the Year'. A profit for Association funds of £102.99 was made on the night. We were also successful in catching the attention of Charles Church, Builders, who sponsored the Individual Tournament for £100 in that season and the following one.

Chapter 7 Summary

At the commencement of the 1983/4 playing season, the fiftieth successive year, the Association was in a healthy state. The number of participating teams steadied at 128, over 11 Divisions, against the national trend of 10% reduction in membership.

The previous season had seen a very close contest for top team in which N.G.T.E., now rechristened Pyestock, had narrowly edged out Pegasus, and there had been robust competition throughout the league. The nine Knockout trophies had been keenly contested and Pegasus had won the Percy Lawes Cup in a splendid final against Burymead. The Individual Tournament winners captured 22 trophies, and Colin Browne had been awarded the Sportsmanship trophy at a well attended Presentation Evening at Dennis'.

Press coverage was generously provided in the Surrey Advertiser, and there was a regular distribution of a Newsletter to all secretaries, some of whom distributed it to their players while others kept it on their mantelpiece.

Because of the research through old Minute Books, Scrapbooks and Handbooks, and interviews with older players, etc., I was able to absorb some of the atmosphere of the early days, and I became increasingly impressed by the record of enthusiasm and dogged work shown, not only by the administrators and the individual players, but also by the club secretaries, some of whom carried on their shoulders the whole burden of maintaining their clubs' impetus over many a long year.

My own experience in the League began in the 1952/3 season, when, on arrival in this area, from Birmingham leagues, I played for the Gomshall club in the Second Division. I was immediately made aware of the friendliness of the Guildford League, and it did not take me long to realise how strong was the standard of play, in what I had expected to be a country backwater. These were the days when Jack Harrington was pre-eminent as a player, and when he, Eric Grabiec, Pat Fry and others put the Enterprise Club at the top.

It was about thirteen years after my first Guildford match -we beat a Merrow team 9 – 0! - that I had the temerity to offer to serve on the Management Committee. Since then I was in an ideal position to look at the Association in all its aspects, from a more objective and informed viewpoint, than I had been used to do. I feel that over the years the Management Committee has, generally, improved considerably in, not only its efficiency and work rate, but also in keeping in the forefront of its thinking that most important consideration – the interests of the players. Although some of my best friends have been Committee members the wheels have not

always run smoothly, and, even in the old days, there were the occasional displays of temperament and incompatibility in which resignations and huffs occurred, of which the details did not appear in records.

There have been amusing moments as well. There was one episode when, in Committee, Barry Vine made an unpopular proposal, which was seconded only so that it could be discussed and when the vote was taken it fell by 17 votes to 1.



Some Trophy Winners 1981/82

re Baggott, Alan Sherwin, Ted Simpkin, Norman Warner Phil Walker, Barbara Clark

Barry then declared that under no circumstances would he vote again in the course of the meeting. The Chairman declared that Barry would vote again. Later on, the lady of the house, in which the meeting was held, asked the assembly for their wishes in respect of tea or coffee, and Barry gravely raised his hand to vote for his choice. Another occasion was when the Dinner/Dance Committee's recommendations were being considered. I had made no secret of the complete lack of interest I had in the menu, so Barry, unbeknown to me, organised the other members so that a dead heat arrived on the momentous matter of ice cream versus fruit salad as the sweet course. For the only time up till then, I had to exercise my casting vote.

A large number of people have been mentioned in these pages, and there is a very much larger number who have not been so included. Part of such omissions arises from my ignorance of the first seventeen years: some as a result of a faltering memory and others because I have hesitated to highlight some people, while leaving out others with perhaps equal claim to renown. However, although Chapter 4 has attempted to give greatest credit where it is undoubtedly due, this book would be incomplete without either initial, or repeated reference to such stalwart contributors as Ben Loveland, George Cannon, Cyril Amey, Brian Mountain, Charlie Cann, Les Parker, Roy Fairhead, Steve Pinn, John Oakley, Sheila Webb, Mick Noble, Janet Guess, John Pullen and Bob Hammond.

At the time I am about to close these pages our Fiftieth Anniversary is only eight months away, and plans are in hand to stage what will be our fourth International Match, against France, in March 1984. The Fiftieth Year will be a momentous one, but it must be my earnest wish that, in later days, it will be regarded as only one episode in an even more remarkable record.

I end with even further acknowledgements: to all those whose reminiscences etc. have been passed on, and to the unknowns who maintained minutes and records. I apologise in advance for any errors of fact which may have gremlined into the book.

I hope that some of you will obtain from these words some of the enjoyment which I have experienced in producing them.

Ted Simpkin 1983

Yes! It's here at last- Awesome!

Part Two 1982-2010

You ain't seen nothing yet!

Chapter 8 Some More Personalities

G. Jack Harrington

No history of the Guildford game would be complete without a mention of Jack, our President since 1992.

In 2008, in an emotionally charged atmosphere, he was formally presented with the 'John Oakley Award' for his contribution to our Association. His duties as President would normally confirm his suitability for this award, but it is my opinion that important as this is it maybe dwarfed by his immense contribution as a player. From the 1940's to the present day-over 60 years representing Guildford at the top level. He has been, still is, the finest ambassador in the playing arena that we could wish for. Always the supreme sportsman. His attitude at all times has been exemplary.

Jack was Boy's Singles Champion in 1945/46, and lost to Gerald Lilywhite in the Men's Final in 1946/47. After completing National Service in 50/51 he reigned as champion for the next eight years. After, for him, a relatively barren period, and two years away from the game, he came back to take a ninth title in 1965, against a 16-year-old Dave Phelps –a feat unlikely to be equalled. Phelps, who was, maybe, the best player never to have won the men's singles, was a losing finalist on three occasions.

Jack actually played Victor Barna in an exhibition match during a finals night in the now defunct Congregational hall, and took a set off Johnny Leach in open Play-Leach was World Champion at the time.

He played for Surrey on numerous occasions, and spearheaded Guildford's successes in the Surrey inter-league competitions. Jack was a wonderful exponent of the classical style of play, and equally proficient at attack or defence –he had no perceivable weaknesses, and was able to change his game, tactically, to suit almost any eventuality.

Possibly Jack's major success was reaching the last eight in the Daily Mirror National Competition in the 50's.



Victor Barna and Jack Harrington 1956

H. Bob Hammond

Bob is one of the major personalities in the Guildford game. His record on the administrative side is second to none.

In 2008 he was given the accolade of Vice President, adding to that of the 'John Oakley' award bestowed earlier.

His actual playing career took off in 1952 with the YMCA – close to the old Cattle Market. Bob was then 17 years old. His earlier playing companions included Tom Harden and Colin Bellchambers.

Bob was introduced into the committee in 1956, and well remembers meetings at the Star Inn, which lasted up to four hours. He has produced the Handbook for around forty years, and run the KO cups, in his words, “Almost Forever”. He ran the individual tournaments for five years at the Dennis’ canteen. When Ted Simpkin died Bob took over as Chairman for five years. He actually served for many years as Vice Chairman under Ted.

I. Bill Marriott

A Vice President of the Association. His contribution to the Guildford game has been substantial. He joined the Committee in the early fifties, and over the next fifteen years filled almost every post- Secretary, Cups, Town Match Secretary and Captain, Press et al!

A consummate defender-in the Richard Bergman style-he was a formidable opponent. A member of the Pegasus Premier Championship side in the fifties. He also won the ‘Dorking Men’s Singles’ on two separate occasions.

In 1956 he donated the ‘Giant Killers’ cup to the Association. Yours truly won it in 1963 with Derek Oliver; we were a scratch pair from the lower Divisions, and reached the semi-final of the Men’s Doubles-probably my only claim to competitive fame.

It was Bill who actually wrote the first history of Guildford Table Tennis, covering the 1934 to 1964 period-most of this material was included in the Simpkin history.

An abiding memory of Bill is of him taking out his false teeth at times of stress during matches.

About the best description of Bill Marriott is that of “Dedicated Sportsman and Enthusiast”

J. The Harden Family

Tom, Neil and David-the Association owes a debt of gratitude to this family. The trio were active in the coaching field, initially participating, and then assisting in the prolific period during the seventies, and eventually taking over the Guildford Coaching Scheme in the eighties. They achieved some fantastic successes which included: Reaching the final of the Carter cup-the Junior Boy’s National Team Championship. Adam Laws, Michael Hill Michael Chan, Maria Taylor- Woodward, Chris Lemon, and many many more all owe much of their success to the ‘Harden Team’

Tom, with over sixty years of continuous play in the league is, absolutely, the longest serving member of the Association. Curiously he was a near neighbour of Jack Harrington in their boyhood days. He began his playing career at 14 years old in the 48/49 season with North St Congregational, in the Second Division, before moving on to the Over 18’s, then to Pegasus, for ten seasons, playing with a youthful Robin Pretty. He inaugurated the West Borough Youth

Club, which ultimately became Aftermath. Tom was appointed Vice President in 2009 for his consistent long term services to the Association

Neil began his committee experience at 17 years old. He is a fine player and coach, and has completed over 30 years on the Guildford committee. During this time, he has been Coaching Officer, Handicap Cup Secretary, KO Cups Secretary, Press Officer, and Match Secretary.

K. Mick Garland-

Vice President of the Association, and one of the Greats in our history in terms of longevity and service to the Association. He took on the post of Trophy Steward in 1986 until 2003, probably the most exacting and frustrating job on the committee. Mick was the first recipient of the 'John Oakley' award, in recognition of his sterling work and dedication over a considerable period, including more than 40 years on the management committee.

Now an octogenarian, Mick did much more than just organise trophies. He began his Table Tennis career in 1953 with the Pegasus club at the old Star Inn. His very close relationship with College Hill started in 1965, and he has been their secretary ever since then.

Mick oversaw huge success for the Haslemere club during the sixties, and early seventies. Some of the finest players in our history have played for College Hill, including the wonderful Bob Bradstreet-fantastic classic defence, coupled with brilliant offence when required. There was Mike Darlington, Des Woolgar, Tony Robinson, Alan Marchant, and Tony Moyse-a lovely man, Norman Way and of course the amazing Shanta Santic. College Hill was one of the first winners of the Handicap KO Cup.

I well remember playing Norman in the Premier in the sixties. I lost the first 21-4 but managed to beat him 22-20 in the third-happy memories! I also had several 'Expedites' with Alan, who was a push and chop man, rather like myself at that time. This was before I cultivated a more dynamic and aggressive style in the pursuit of coaching excellence (pause for laughter) – *Pretentious? Mois?*

The College Hill playing facilities have always been one of the best in the area. There was the gym on the Hill, then Haslemere Hospital, and more recently the Village Hall at Brook.

Mention must be made of Ruth, Mick's wife, who helped with the trophies. As Mick said, the job would have been impossible without her!

L. Janet Guess

Daughter of the famous Ted Simpkin. She has completed over 35 years of dedicated service to this Association-a wonderful lady! Janet began her committee experience in the early seventies as minute's secretary. This was followed by: Stints as KO cups overseer for six straight years, and tournament organiser through most of the eighties. During this period, she was also secretary of the massive, and very successful, Pegasus club- 17 teams, at the Stoughton road site.

Latterly Janet has served as; Match Secretary, Treasurer, as well as Cup Steward. In the eighties she moved to Hampshire, whilst still maintaining close links with the Guildford League, and ran the successful Ash club for many years.

Janet was responsible for typing up the entire first part of this History, for Ted, to 1982...



Prettiest Table Tennis Girls in the Country!

Kerry Sally Kim Sarah Sally



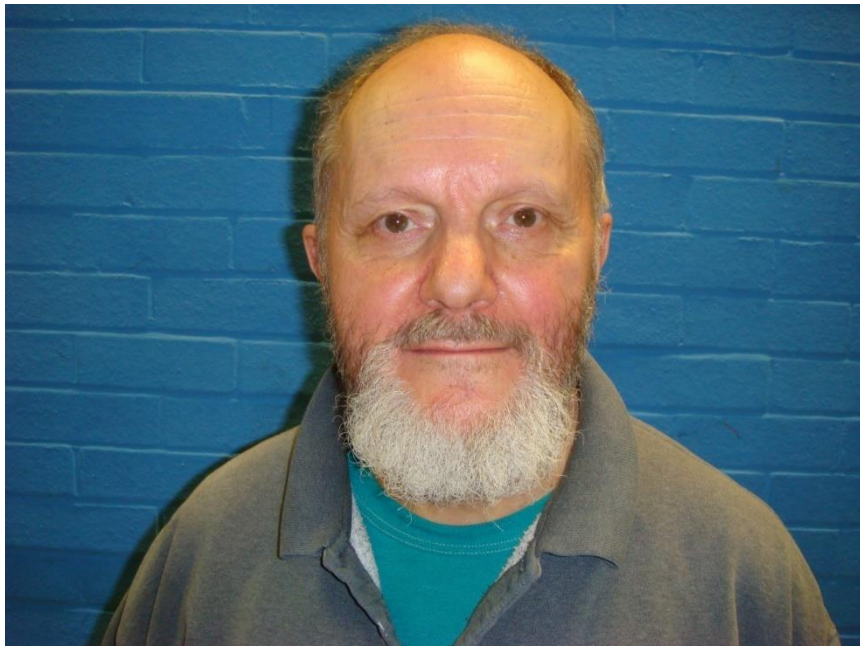
“The Fabulous Hardens”



Bhalla the Bat



The “Indefatigable” Dave Brown in Administrative Mode



Tony Laws



Mike Willimott in Reflective Mood.



The All Conquering Burymead / Grid side of the 90's
Snelson Bhalla Holmes



Vets National Champions 2000-2001

Callcut Robinson Bhalla



“The Likely Girls” – Kim Farminer and Kerry East



Robert Lemon- The New Breed!



The ‘Magnificent’ Graham Watts



Gordon “Good Boy” Aplin



***Ash side “Salt of the Table Tennis Earth”
Dave Brown Margaret Thornton Brian Lunn***



Dave Greateorex

Graham Norton

Pictured in a vigorous training session



The “Amazing” Dave Phelps



Terry Haley



Rob and Adam in Dynamic Action! Photo by James



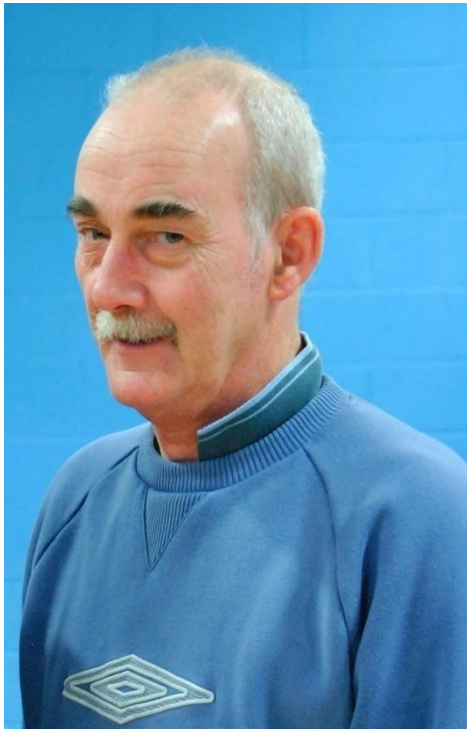
Tanner

Pernet

Laws

“Beginning of the Burymead B Phenomena”

Photo by James



Our Ken

Ross

All Photos by James



Scott

Feifei



“The Old Codgers!”-Photo by James



Maria Taylor-Woodward in Full Flow! -Photo by James



John Robinson-Photo by James



Richard Seymour-Photo by James



Mick Hill-Photo by James



Fei fei Pei - Photo by James



Matt Pernet- Champion 2008/9-Photo by James



Robin Pretty-“Who’s a Pretty Boy Then?”

Photo by James



Alain Choo Choy -Photo by James

M. John Pullen

He began his playing career in 1938 for the Monarchs club. He played in forces competitions during the war, and except for a lay off following a car accident, has played continuously every year until 1983. John had a consistently successful career being a very sharp taker of an early ball, a killer of a loose shot and a master of the drop shot.

He had to hang up his bat because of the effects of the car accident. Fortunately, he was able to continue at that time with his committee work.

John's dedicated service to the Association began in 1953 as tournament secretary. His full contribution is outlined in the appendices but includes a twelve-year stint as Match Secretary.

He was made a Vice President of the Association in recognition of his major contribution to the league. Sadly, John died in the early 90's.

N. Ramesh Bhalla

It is Sunday evening 9th March 2008, and I am sitting at my laptop trying to compose this piece about Ramesh. It has just been my privilege to witness the most amazing feat in our, or probably anyone else's, sporting history. That includes Barnsley's wins against Liverpool, and Chelsea

in the FA cup- the latter over this same weekend. You must, dear reader, realise that at 72 years of age and an avid follower, and indeed player, of all kinds of sport that, in my time, I have seen it all in the sporting field, until this weekend that is. But I digress!

This weekend Ramesh Bhalla lost in all the events that he entered on the Saturday; Vets, Masters, Premier Singles, etc etc!! In the eyes of many he was washed up, finished. His average in the league was, for him, mediocre, he wasn't even seeded for the Men's Singles this season. At least he made it through to the last 16! Then the transformation. You must remember that the last Bhalla success in this, the major competition was in 1994. Added to this, all the top 12 players, with the exception of Robert Lemon, were present.

In the quarter finals Ramesh came up against number one seed Marc Burman. After watching the early stages of this match it was obvious to me that an upset was definitely on the cards. Ramesh literally blew his opponent away with crisp hard precise shots, timed to perfection turning back the clock 30 years. He was even able to hit winners off the Burman service, not allowing him to use his normally devastating loop drive

This performance was repeated in the semis against Richard Tanner, which lined up a final encounter with Matt Pernet, who had survived a five setter with John Robinson in the other semi, and although Matt went 2-1 up in sets he was, ultimately, unable to contain a rampant Bhalla, who easily won the fifth set in fine style, for his sixth title success.

Ramesh Bhalla was born in Nairobi in 1935 moving to England in 1956, initially playing in the very strong North Middlesex league. He is a Chartered Electrical Engineer, and in 1962 moved to Newcastle where he played for Northumberland, in a team which included Alan Ransome, who later became ETTA Chairman. From 1969 he lived in Glasgow. In the Scottish open championship, he beat Nicky Jarvis, who at that time was ranked number 2 in England.

Finally, Ramesh settled in Guildford in 1980 working for CEGB. He quickly became Hampshire number one, winning their closed championship. He won his first Guildford title in 1981. In subsequent years I am pleased to say that juniors, from my 70's coaching scheme, such as Steve Woodgate, Terry Haley, Glen Baker, Graham Russell and Mark Oakley gave him some problems.

Ramesh, in 2001, spearheaded a major Guildford National success in winning the Alec Brook team championship for Veterans. He has represented England in a vet's match against Germany. On the administrative side he has been Secretary of the highly successful Burymead club for many years.

P. David Brown.

David came on the scene in the late nineties, and immediately made a tremendous impact, and since then has given us exceptional, unstinting service as in turn: Chairman, Secretary, Statistics Wizard, Tournament Organiser, as well as 'Being There' for almost everything else. The nearest parallel to Dave was Trevor Channing the 'Human Dynamo' of the seventies.

R. The Laws Family.

Tony Laws and family- Shula and Adam. The influx of talent to the league, encouraged by Tony through the coaching scheme, and other contacts, has enabled us to halt our decline in numbers and Divisions. He also did very important stints as Chairman, and Vice Chairman. Shula is Secretary of the Godalming club, which looks set to achieve fame as one of the leading outfits in the new Millennium. Adam was probably the best player in the Association prior to visiting and working in China, where he teaches English. He continues to hone his playing skills and it will be interesting to see how far he has improved when he returns back to us.

S. Ken Lemon and the Challoner Club.

Ken Lemon and the Challoner club, as 'Keepers' of the Table Tennis Centre, are fairly typical of the young up and coming breed of clubs, which the Association now enjoys. They have put in an enormous amount of time and effort in maintaining a very important facility, without which we would be lost! Ken, in particular, is a tower of strength. He has been a huge contributor to the Association, in various committee posts, over the years, as well as the Challoner connection. He is also father of Chris and Rob. In recognition of his services to the Association Ken was appointed Vice President in 2009.

T. Mike Willimott

Is definitely worth a mention in this company of Giants of local Table Tennis-he was in the same era and age as Jack Harrington. In 2001 Mike won the National over 70's singles. But I think his contribution to local 'Ping' goes far more deeply than this. He came to live in Guildford in 59, and eventually established himself as Guildford Borough Architect. A 'One Club' man with Bramley, he has always played to a very high standard at First Division and Premier Level. He has been Vice Chairman of the Association on several occasions.

Bramley have moved their venues around a bit over the years, and started in the Jolly Farmer in Bramley village- Eric Maybank, Fred Hedger, George Heywood, and Dudley Taylor, were, with Mike, some of the earlier members. At one time they had ten sides in the league at various levels.

In the severe winter of 62, Mike suffered a motor cycle accident, badly injuring his shoulder. Being a bit of a fitness fanatic, cycling was his other love, he made a full recovery. He was one of several players who benefited from the 'Combination Rubber' and 'Twiddling' phenomena which hit the game some 35 years ago.

In conversation with Jack Harrington, he said that the most recent highlight of his playing career was the Bronze award that he and Mike obtained in the Doubles, at the World Vets Championship in 2002 at Lucerne France, in the over 70's category

U. Some Others.

There are, of course, many more unsung heroes. Including Richard Green, who filled an unprecedented number of roles, including that of the very important General Secretary ship for many years. It is suggested that the reader consults the appendices, which fully details the contributions made by members such as Richard. As an aside I must relate an extract from a 1987 minute, which mentioned that Jack Dawson had proposed a severe reprimand for Richard, for some anomaly over the minutes-naturally passed, unanimously, in his absence.

Trevor Free, who took over the Mick Garland job as Trophy Steward, has done an incredible amount of work in setting up a complete record of trophy winners, as well as all the fetching and carrying normally associated with the post. Sue, Trevor's partner, must also be mentioned in despatches as of considerable help in Trevs endeavours. They have been instrumental in updating information required to complete the Appendices in this book. Their input has been invaluable!

Steve Pinn was Press Officer in the early 70's, and again in the late 90's. He oversaw a massive increase in the Associations press coverage, mainly due to his consummate professionalism as a working journalist. The marvellous John Oakley carried on the tradition during the 'Golden Years' of the 70's. John, a major sports writer for the Nationals, was, like Steve, a real sports enthusiast- ensuring, for us, a fantastic number of column inches in the Advertiser sports pages.

Paul Brook has been Auditor, on our accounts, for over 40 years, having just retired from this post (2008) As a player he competed in the powerful Central London leagues in the early 50's, and actually reached the doubles semi-finals of the 'English Open Championships' during this era. This was when 'The Open' was next in status only to the 'Worlds' He also played for Surrey on numerous occasions. Paul joined our league in the early 70's, enjoying huge success with Pegasus. In fact, he still turns out regularly for them, despite his advancing years.

Mick Strode certainly warrants a paragraph or two. Like Harry Spraggs Mick has reached the highest ranks of Umpiring and Refereeing excellence. He has been extremely helpful in the writing of this history, regarding matters of rules and regulations, and the dates involved therein. It is very pleasing to have somebody playing in our Association, who is probably the 'Number One Official' of our sport in the country. Mick is in an Elite Squad of International Umpires, who holds the prestigious 'Blue Badge' ranking.

Interestingly, regarding our press coverage, there have been periods in our history, which, to put it bluntly, have been utterly dire. The readers of this history may judge for themselves by perusing my Archive records. There were two particularly bleak periods in the early 80's and the bulk of the 90's. Ted Simpkin and Stephen Pinn were our saviours during these difficult times. Luckily, when Steve stood down, the incredible Dave Brown took over, to cement the

excellent relations that we have with the Surrey Advertiser, resulting in the great coverage that we still enjoy today!

Chapter 9 The Clubs – The Early Years

A look at the club scene shows an amazing shift of power from 1934, when Gammons were victorious in the most Senior Division for three straight years, to the present day-see appendices.

The season 1950/51 saw the name of Enterprise on the honours board for the first time. They monopolised things for the next 19 years, taking the Premier title 12 times, and the Percy Lawes KO Cup no less than 16 times. The successes were in part due to a certain Mr Harrington, as well as tremendous strength in depth- Frank Robbins, Ronnie Rees, Basil West, Charlie Cann, Eric Grabiec, Eddie Kulik and Pat Fry. No club has savoured the successes of the Enterprise machine before or since. Unfortunately, the club no longer exists!

Other teams took over the Enterprise mantle. A young Ash side- Gray, Lyons, and Bruce –took three consecutive premier titles in the early seventies. Even younger players of the Pegasus club tasted glory in this decade-the rise of the juniors when the coaching scheme finally bore fruit! Simon Vine- the first junior to win the Guildford Men’s Singles. Mark Oakley, Glen

Baker, Steve Woodgate, Graham Russell et al! All involved in huge Pegasus success during this period at all levels.

When you realise that in 1977-this was when the World Championships took place in Birmingham-that Pegasus had 17 teams in the 14 Divisions which constituted our league. This was the absolute peak of Table Tennis in Guildford. There were no less than twelve under 17's playing in the Premier division; they included David Hannah and Terry Haley from Abinger Hammer. Juniors totally monopolised the Major trophies during this period.

The 48 years up to 1982 is exceptionally well covered in the 'Simpkin Writings'. The previous notes in this chapter being, merely, additional material which I have included.

We next embark on a journey which will embrace the next 25years or so.

Chapter 10 1982-1988

82/83

The season opened in the Premier Division with NGTE, in defence of their title, thrashing Imperial Life by 9-1. The team was Schwartz, Care, and Gilham. Dave Gilham is still a formidable player-now with Merrow. The Aldershot based side went through several name changes- National Gas Turbine Establishment (NGTE), Pyestock and Cody. They now operate as Broadmoor. I must, at this stage, record a rather poignant email that I received from Dave in 2008. Which I repeat verbatim:

"I do recall us winning the Premier with a squad comprising Graham Outrim, Ian Schwartz, Nigel Care and Myself. Nigel has just re-emerged, and playing in the Aldershot League-I had to tell him that the ball was a little bigger, and that he could not have red on both sides of the bat, and the score is now up to 11 not 21. He beat me last week- not bad after a 20 year lay off.

He still retains his terrific forehand loop. Sadly, Ian died in 2004. He was a great personal friend, and I miss his infectious enthusiasm for the game. I was friends with Ian for many years. He came to my wedding in 1976. He used to joke to his wife Jenny that he would die playing Table Tennis, and he wanted to be buried with all his trophies. Then, saying, on second thoughts, better not as there wouldn't be room for him. He died on the table, as he predicted, playing in a county match, and we all lost a real character. Graham is also a good friend. He is a full time coach, and works tirelessly to promote Table Tennis for youngsters." Dave added "Funny, but just writing about the old team makes you realise just how many good times you can have playing Table Tennis, and sometimes take them for granted".

In the Third Division Jean West, mother of Linda Makepiece, playing for Burpham D, took all three against a Merrow side comprising Mick Walker, Colin Bellchambers, and Roy Boswell- a considerable performance!

Challoner had just been formed in 81, winning the eighth Division title, and were soon sowing the seeds for major successes in the future. It was Phil Knapp who started the Challoner Hall Club - more of them later!

Youth was still having its fling with Pegasus A crushing St Luke's-Dave Crowley, Chris Harper, and Colin Browne 9-1. The Pegasus team was Steve Woodgate, Graham Russell and Dave Burnham.

In November Joe Melchiano's name appeared in press reports. Joe still, happily, plays regularly with Bramley. In the same report Len and Martin Jones of the Buzby club were mentioned, both players and club have disappeared-where are they now?

January, and the sad news that John Pullen had to halt his playing career due to the after affects of a serious car accident. Luckily he was able to continue his work on the Management Committee.

February, and the Percy Lawes. Merrow A pulled off a surprise win against joint favourites NGTE 5-4. The team was Steve Conquest, Mike Barrett, and Gerry McCallough.

June, and the AGM-there was a vote of complete confidence in the outgoing committee-well what about that then! The team fees were raised from £11 to £12.

83/84

In September, Ted Simpkin wrote about rule changes, from the ETTA, concerning; firstly, the serve, that players must not stamp on the floor as they serve, as this effectively masks the sound of the ball on the bat, and hence the opponents sense of timing. The other change was the rationalisation of so called 'Magic Bats'. Each side of the bat must now have different coloured rubbers. This change didn't come in, locally, until 88/89.

In the first Division Fred Florence beat Jack Harrington two straight-not a bad performance from Fred who, like Jack, plays the 'Classic' hard bat style.

October, and David and Neil Harden completed a unique double at Warner's holiday camps. David won the Champion of Champions title at Southleigh, whilst Neil took the same title at the Coronation camp.

The Association waits to learn whether it is going to be able to stage its promised International between England and France.

Trevor Free was the star attraction when winning all three for Burpham against Merrow in the Sixth Division. In the Second Division Technical College A was comprehensively beaten by champions elect Dennis A 9-1. What was significant was that I lost to Neil Harden, and Paul and Roger Tedder, all being members of my coaching scheme from the 70's. I have to say that I was more than pleased with the results of my labours!

November, and the official news was that the Association would be hosting the long awaited international match against France, at the Sports Centre, although sponsorship is a problem. Still, a fitting celebration of Jubilee year. In the event we had to go it alone!!

A mention of Peter Buttle - father of the highly successful Mark- playing for Pegasus J, in defeating previously unbeaten Peperharrow A by 9-1. Peter achieved infamy during the 70's, when he purchased one of the first carbon fibre blades, with super spin rubber, costing a small fortune. In the bats first outing Peter lost to a player, who performed the feat, it was rumoured, with a plywood sandpaper job from an Xmas stocking. ***"This is Table-Tennis Jim, but not as we know it!"***

December, and Tom Harden took all three for Aftermath against Old Guildfordians- Kelvin Searle, Morris Kemp, and Frank Tait-not bad Tom!!

What was amazing about Ted Simpkins press coverage was the number of players that he managed to mention each week. Just for example 2/12/83 the following mentions included: Ramesh Bhalla, Mike Fisher, Alan Sherwin, Brian Lunn, Sandra Green, Alan Howling, Clive Mattin, Kerry Merritt, Alan Osgood, Bill Matlock, Basil Warner, and Ian Farley. They are still, happily, playing in our league at the time of writing.

In addition, there was Graham Bateman, Steve Hodder, Barry Piercey, Bill Abbott, Barbara Clark, Phil Walker, Nicci Taylor, Paul Spicer, Dave Gillet, Peter Bridger, Keith Reed, Mark Bullivant, Jack Pratt, Julia Trimming, Mike Gill, Sally Conway, Mark Enticknapp, Alwyn Edwards, Colin Pearce, Jim Stark, Bill Marriott, Mary Clegg, Keith Please, David Annis, Roy Grace, Mick Noble, Phil Knapp, Dave Collier, Ron Davis, and Kevin Rogers. Where are they now? Some have sadly passed away, or left the area, others will have simply stopped playing for whatever reason. Those for whom I no longer have contact, I would be very pleased to hear from you.

The New Year beckons and the most impressive statistic in the Premier Division belong to Steve Woodgate with 26/27. Rather foolishly Ted Simpkin predicted that Steve would take the Singles title in April, and that Pegasus would win the championship-he was wrong on both

counts! Steve Pinn was mentioned in despatches having a good season with Old Guildfordians, and in the Handicap Singles final David Harden beat Mick Walker.

Success for Pegasus H, in an early round of the Intermediate Cup, when Trevor Gerrard beat Arthur Kurn in the ninth game. A young Kim Merritt outlasted Peter Anthony at 23-21 in the third, which, in retrospect, was crucial to the final outcome.

February, and the news was, that Desmond Douglas had won the English Open Singles Championship at Brighton-becoming the only home winner in the last 20 years. He was due to play in the International against France soon at Guildford. In the event England won by 5-2, but a big surprise was the defeat of Douglas by Patrick Birocheau. Unhappily we were left with a bill for £500 as a sponsor was not forthcoming.

April, and the Burymead club took the Premier title for the first time, and they did the double when they beat Pegasus in the Percy Lawes final. With Ramesh Bhalla winning the Open Singles it was a very good year for the club, and the beginning of an era of successes for them.

The summer came, and went, during which time Jack Dawson, the Association Secretary, took off for Helsinki to take part in the World Vets Championships. He later resigned his post at the AGM, and Kim Merritt took over the very important position for a while. Pegasus underwent their annual spring clean at the Stoughton headquarters. In the summer league Jane Boswell beat Mick Dray 41-39 in the first of their 21up games.

84/85

The start of the season and Ted's fancy for the Premier title was Burymead –in this case he was absolutely correct! Fast forward to February and Cliff Keen –probably the best hard bat defender this league has produced- took all three against a very good St Lukes side of 'Modern Rubber Aces' which included John Callcut, Dave Crowley, and Chris Harper. The feat was all the more surprising as Cliff had a fairly depressing record against the trio. He still plays to a high standard in the First Division despite his advancing years.

The annual tournament and Terry Haley- a product of the 70's coaching scheme, who returned to the local game after a period of rest due to a car accident- took the Open Singles title for the first time of what was to be a fairly regular occurrence. He defeated the previous holder Ramesh Bhalla on the way

85/86

Burymead, going for three Premier titles in a row, crushed last year's runners up St Luke's 9-1. Their team - Bhalla, Bateman, and Denman.

The next piece of history I record verbatim from the Simpkin report.

“Hidden in the Archives of the Associations 52 years of organised match play are many stories of strange events and odd records. But I would hesitate to deny that another peak (or trough) was not reached in a recent match between Third Division teams Pegasus and Weyburn”

“In one set between Mike Ward and Paul Spicer the score stood at 13-11, when the 15 minute expedite rule was called. Earlier in the set a rally of 302 strokes had been counted -possibly a record for the league?” - Shades of the earlier farcical situation, when two hard bat pushers, at International level, would play for a couple of hours for a single point! *We have, indeed, entered the twilight zone!*

In February there was a mention that the ETTA was going to experiment with 11 up games, apparently bringing more excitement into matches. Strange that it took so long to come to fruition.

May, and the sad news was that we had lost Percy Lawes, one of the guiding lights at the birth of the Association in 1934. Percy was the inspiring figure which led the sport in Guildford, and the surrounding district in the early years and through the war years. For a fuller picture of his life and times see Ted Simpkins earlier piece. Percy Lawes served as President up to the time of his death.

Another loss later this year was that of Alec Brook. An England International, he was for many years Honary Advisor to the Association, but best known for playing exhibitions in music halls during, and after the war, with the legendary Victor Barna. Alec did much to help the league expand in numbers and strength. An interesting comment from Ted Simpkin “In comparing Alec with modern players, we are faced with some difficulties- it is rather like comparing Fred Perry with John McEnroe”

Burymead took the Premier with an unprecedented 191points.

At the AGM I nominated Ted Simpkin as President, seconded by Ken Readman, passed unanimously!

86/87

September, and it was reported that Merrow had the largest contingent in the league.

January, and in the Premier Division the headline was “Gibbs puts brakes on Pyestock advance” Paul Gibbs -where are you now? From the 70’s coaching scheme, took two off Pyestock, the title contenders, only losing to Graham Green 23-21 in the decider to deny him a maximum. On what I suppose is something of a sour note, I must comment that many of my

prodigies from the 70's, both girls and boys, gave up the game, despite having reached a very high standard-*what a waste!*

March, and Ted commented on the fact that Guildford was well featured on the new England computer ranking system, with Ramesh Bhalla at 73, and Glen Baker at ten.

In the same report the death of Tony Miller was mentioned. Miller had for many years been a power for Surrey. Interestingly he was the highest ranked player in England never to have gained International honours- not a lot of people know that! Except for me and Gordon Holmes, who brought it to my attention one day- and now of course your good selves? Remember Gordon no one likes a 'smart ass' we have spared no expense to make sure all our information is Kosher.....!!!

Tony moved to Guildford in 66 and joined Newlands. His superb defence was to prove a stumbling block for all opponents for over three years. In consecutive years he took the Guildford open singles against Phelps, Harrington, and Bradstreet. He was denied a fourth in the 'Shanta Santic Year' when he suffered injury in a car crash. It is interesting to speculate what might have been! In Oct70 He made a considerable comeback, taking all three against the previous season's champions Ash- Keen, Bruce and Gray. In Jan71 he lost his three-and-a-half-year-old unbeaten record to Cliff Keen 17 and 17. Later in the season he lost in the Open Singles to Terry Bruce, who took out Jimmy Moore in the final.

End of April and Ted Simpkin reporting on the Vets final he said, "The final of the Vets cup has for many years been the showpiece of the knockout competitions. This year was no exception. Pyestock –comprising John Millard, John Rose and Harry Spraggs, beating Fetcham- Ron Stacey, Bill Holder and Tony Cash". This, in fact, preceded a long period in which the Merrow club have reigned supreme in this event. *The writer asks when someone will knock them off their perch.*

Burymead, who seem to have assumed the mantle of the defunct Enterprise club, did the double for the third season running.

At the AGM Richard Green, the General Secretary, reported that Fred Drinkwater, the Treasurer, had resigned on a point of principle concerning the cost of a proposed agreement with the local Sports Centre. John Pullen had decided to retire from the committee after decades of dedicated service to the Association. A presentation of a carriage clock to John was made at this meeting.

87/88

September,

and the big news was that Terry Haley had defected from Burymead to Pyestock. Haley certainly had a reputation for moving his talents around the top clubs over the years.

October, and Steve Woodgate lost all three when playing for Seeboard against Merrow B-a rare occurrence! Creasey, Barrett, and Conquest made up the Merrow side.

In a special article by the Advertiser it was reported that Glen Baker had decided to turn professional after soaring up the ranking lists from 88th to tenth in just two years. In the event he didn't quite make the big time.

Glen eventually went to live in Thailand, with his Thai wife. At the time I thought that he was probably making a fortune with his building skills- he is a Master Builder. In the event that was not the end of the story.

November, and in a recent team event, organised by the Newbury Association, Hannah Webber, Maria Taylor- Woodward, Andrea Hopkinson, and Jill Whitehead won the under 17 Girls' Team Competition after a tense final with Maidenhead.

At the turn of the year Ted, again stuck his neck out, in predicting a Pystock success in the Premier at seasons end.

January, and Mark Lockyer lost his unbeaten record to George Crutcher in a Sixth Division clash.

In March, Burymead put paid to a Pystock double when they beat them 5-3 in the quarter final stage of the Percy Lawes, as a prelude to winning the trophy for the fifth time in a row. They followed this success by inflicting a 9-1 beating in the league the very next week. Luckily, for the Hampshire based club, they still managed to take the Premier title by a margin of seven points from Burymead.

In the Open Singles a new name to Guildford Table Tennis, that of Mike Hammond, who beat Haley 14 and 18 in the final. Hammond soon disappeared from the Guildford scene.

A certain Phil Snelson, soon to make his mark in the Premier, topped the Second Division averages with 95% for Uplands

Chapter 11 1988-1995

Start of the new season, the Associations 55th, and Champions Pyestock are crushed 7-3 by last year's runners up Burymead. An amazing result considering that they fielded absolutely their best side Outrim, Haley, and Millward.

It was reported that there was an obligation to play with the bat having different coloured sides. Apparently this rule had already been broken by at least one club-it didn't mention which player or club. I well remember Keith Cunningham, of the Merrow club, attempting to change the colour of one side of his aging pimpled rubber using a bio, with disastrous effects-discoloration of hands and ball. *"Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive"* But the really stupid thing is, that if some rational thought had been given to the whole issue of rubbers by the Authorities innocents, like Keith, would not have been bothered with such daft regulations.

Come back Keith Cunningham all is forgiven!

The postal strike was making communications difficult-giving several clubs a further excuse for late submission of score cards.

In October Burymeads Alan Underwood died at the age of 51 during a match at Bramley.

November, and the tables were turned on Buymead, for a change, when they lost to Merrow 6-4 with Robinson and Creasey doing the major damage.

February, and Harry Spraggs was off to the World championships in Dortmund as one of the two selected umpires from England.

In the annual handicap tournament Peter Palmer was going for a third successive singles title. He eventually came unstuck in the semis of this event, when he fell to Bill Blackbrow of Wonersh

89/90

The Ted Simpkin review, and he reported that there were 83 teams ready for the off, and that the Premier title would lie between the usual suspects-Burymead, Merrow, and Pyestock.

This season there were several players returning after periods of absence. Graham Russell, a name from the 70's coaching scheme, to join old compatriots Woodgate, Baggott, and Buttle at Seeboard. Simon Vine, from the same coaching stable, and a previous 'Open Singles' winner, joined the Pyestock outfit.

In the initial encounter between the two clubs Vine fell to Russell, but beat Woodgate and Baggott.

December, and Burymeads stranglehold on the Percy Lawes was broken when they lost to Pyestock by 5-2.

In the New Year Mark Bleakley, another 'Out of Towner' from Burymead, won the Open Singles, to deprive both Haley and Bhalla- Bleakley soon disappeared without trace from the scene.

March, and Chairman Bob Hammond, in his newsletter, reported that Fred Pratt had died-he of the immaculate backhand flick. Fred, and Brother Jack, together with Alwyn Edwards, played for many years with Busbridge in the upper reaches of the league.

The big interest this season was the fact that Burymead went away pot less for a change. Merrow won the Premier, but were denied the double when Seeboard- Russell, Baggott, and Woodgate took out Robinson, Creasey, and Fisher 5-4. This signalled a period of Merrow dominance in both cup and league.

90/91

Janet Guess took over the Match Secretaries post from Ted Simpkin, her dad. A small snippet of note was that John Callcut, playing for Merrow B, against their A side, prevented a whitewash by taking two singles from Barrett and Creasey-thus enabling me to give our beloved chairman (2007+) a mention. John entered our ranks in the early 70's, and has always maintained an extremely high standard in Premier competition. His talent and indeed appetite for the game remains largely undiminished.

The New Year saw the deaths of Keith Taylor, who had played local Table Tennis for 40years, and George Cannon an ex-Officer of the Association in the 50's. I knew Keith very well, and coached his daughters Sally, and Nicky. He was a lovely man, well respected, and extremely popular.

The seasons end and Merrow A took the major title, but were again denied the double at the hands of the 'Old enemy' in a thrilling 5-4 encounter in the final of the Percy Lawes.

July, and Ted Simpkin made the news rather than writing about it. He was honoured with an award from the ETTA to mark his devoted service to the sport. He was only the second local person to be granted such an Award-John Pullen was the first, ten years ago. Teds enormous contribution to our Association is well documented in this history.

91/92

For the first time, for many years, Ted Simpkin was no longer Press Officer, a prelude no doubt to his death in the summer of 92. Ian Cooper took over for one season only. In retrospect this began a major decline in our Press coverage in the 90's. The task of knocking out regular reports, together with the necessary communication and contact with the Sports Editors, on a week by week basis, seemingly beyond the capabilities of the holders of the post.

Some pieces of news of note: Graham Russell, whom I coached in the 70's, won the Open Singles, beating Dave Crowley-he didn't drop a set in an outstanding weekend's performance.

However, the shine was slightly taken off the success, as many of the established stars were absent at out of town tournaments.

Merrow A won the Premier title with Creasey, Robinson and Fisher. John Robinson topped the averages with Creasey and Fisher just below him, an unbeatable combination-they took the title by 32 points, but were again denied the double when National Grid A amazingly took the Percy Lawes. National Grid of course had undergone a name change from Burymead and in a few years was to revert back to their original title.

Peter Palmer topped the end of season averages in the First Division with 85%, as Ash A took the championship by 20 points.

Summer, and the sad news that Ted had, indeed, gone to meet the 'Great Umpire in the Sky'. He had had a long battle with Parkinson's. His contribution to Guildford Table Tennis is best summed up by Bob Hammond "***His good sense and firmness prevailed as the controlling influence on the Executive Committee***"

The tremendous debt that this Association owes to Ted is huge, and his contribution is well documented in these writings.

92/93

Press coverage almost zero, excepting for a few tables throughout the season. One piece of news worthy of note was that Merrow finally achieved the double of Cup and League for the very first time-deep joy in the Merrow camp! And, indeed, singing and dancing in the streets!

Dave Mairs of Farncombe A topped the Second Division averages with 91%. Harry Spraggs was next with 90% -what a tragic loss these two were to the Association at this time the Association had seven Divisions with 88 teams.

At the AGM Richard Green proposed Jack Harrington as President- accepted unanimously, with what was to prove a very wise choice.

At the same meeting team fees were increased by £2 to £25.

Mick Strode reported that from 1st September the volley rule would change-if a player volleys the ball from beyond the end line he will no longer lose the point. Just another example of a ridiculous rule, which took years to change. Still on the subject of rule change, Gail McCulloch said that from September bat rubbers could only be coloured red and black, whereas previously the rule had stated different colours. I hope that the reader enjoys these little tit bits of information from the era.

93/94

Oct, and it was interesting to see Richard Tanner turning out for the National Grids thrashing of Merrow C 9-1. Richard of course has been in the current (2009) all conquering Burymead

B side . Merrow C then proceeded to take four points out of their A side –last years champions- funny old game!

A headline grabber was “Cranleigh Suffer Lemon Crushing” - relating to Chris Lemon, brother of Rob, and son of Ken, getting a maximum for Challoner.

November, and it was “*50 Up for Roy*” Roy Boswell played his first league match in 1943 and 50 years on has never missed a season. He was given a special award by the Association, and the Merrow club, for whom he played for 40 of those years. He actually founded the Merrow club in 1953. I remember playing with Roy and Jim Mathis in a little store room under the stage of the Merrow village hall- nothing as grand as today. We won the first Division title in the 64/65 season. That was in the two points for a win era- I was club secretary during this period.JRD



Roy Boswell

Jim Mathis

John Diggins

Merrow A - Division One Champions 1964/65

The season ran out with Merrow sharing the honours with Grid. According to the thin coverage of the time they had a good lead for most of the season, but lost it at the end. Pegasus A Beat Grid in the Lawes, but lost to Merrow in the final.

In the annual tournament the headlines was “Bhalla the Bat was a Five Star Champion”- Open singles, Doubles, Vet Singles and Doubles, and, to round it all off, the Hard Bat Singles as well.

The AGM, and in looking back at the minutes, I found an item with which I must take issue. It concerned financial backing for the coaching scheme, to the effect that in the beginning, in the 70’s, the Association had always provided financial backing, Indeed the converse was true, in that in this era we were totally financially independently viable, and were in fact subsidising the Association, as they borrowed our tables for their various tournaments every year, saving a considerable sum for them. I well remember the Hardens digging into their pockets, deeply, to subsidise the scheme, when they ran it in the 80’s. Unfortunately, people soon forget!

94/95

Start of another season, and a report, I noticed, concerned newly promoted Farnham in the Premier. Having been thrashed 10-0 by MerrowA they proceeded to beat Grid B by 7-3. A blast from the past, for me, was the mention of Malcolm Read playing for Farnham. He was a considerable star from the 60’s/70’s era, turning out for Ash, and Pegasus-where are you now Malcolm and, indeed, Farnham?

Fast forward to January and 11-year-old Michael Chan lifted the Handicap Singles title for the second year in succession by defeating Chris Lemon in the final.

MerrowA took the Premier title with 182 points over Grid A on 150 together with the Percy Lawes for the double. Cornhill won the Fifth Division with Steve Simnett and John Mann high in the Averages-I always remember matches against Cornhill being very convivial affairs!

Chapter 12 1995-2002

95/96

A fiery start to the new season where, in the battle of the titans, Merrow A Beat Grid A 7-3. Then, when they took on Aftermath, guess what? Junior Michael Hill beat Open Singles champion Jason Creasey 21-19 in the final set, and Merrow eventually limped to a 6-4 result against an Aftermath side seven places below them-as I have said before funny old game!

December, and the fantastic news was that a dream, for so long, was soon to be realised. A £161,500 National Lottery Sports Fund grant had been made for a dual purpose centre at Bishop Reindorp School. This grant, combined with an ETTA contribution of £70,000, and £40,000 from SCC, plus £30,000 from school funding, meant that, at last, the Association would have its own playing facilities. Building costs were to be £300,000. Thus ended a three-year battle to secure funding for the scheme. Gail McCulloch, the head of PE at the school, and local coach and player, was instrumental in securing funds for the project. The Challoner club took over the administration of the centre under the continuous control of Ken Lemon. The Association owes a massive debt of thanks to this club, and Ken.

In a Management committee meeting in March the minutes recorded a report from Adam Laws, the Press Officer at the time. It stated that he was having difficulty in getting reports published. Press reports at the time bears this out. The Advertiser certainly missed the news of the season, that a boy's squad of Adam Laws, Mick Hill, Michael Chan, and Chris Lemon had reached the final of the Carter Cup-the National Junior Boys Team Competition- after a terrific last gasp win against Bradford in the semi-finals. They were managed by Youth Organiser and Coach Jane Barrela. Indeed, Chan was ranked number one under 12 junior in the country, apparently un-noticed. Unfortunately, they were to lose in the final.

Season end and DRA A took the Premier title, with Terry Haley on board, and included Graham Outrim and John Millward. John –who still plays at the top level-had, and indeed still has, the most awesome forehand fast loop drive I have ever seen! One point separated them from Merrow B, the closest finish since 1969 when Ash A took the title by a single point from College Hill, after beating Enterprise B 10-0- including Jack Harrington.

It was worth noting that Jack took all three in the first encounter between the teams. Ash achieved a feat that no other local club had ever achieved in living memory, that of taking

three off the 'Great Man'. All his matches went to three; in fact, he was 14-10 up against Dave Gray, having won the first, when Gray had a purple patch for a famous victory. I was there to see it all, and remember Bob Bradstreet of College Hill, who had witnessed the whole thing, crying in his beer afterwards-marvellous!

DRA also took the Percy Lawes for a rather unique double, denying Burymead/Nat Grid and Merrow for a change!

Haley beat John Callcut for the Open Singles, but a huge surprise was the Second Division pairing of Chris Lemon and Graham Watts beating Haley and Mike Barrett in the Doubles. This was Graham's first season in the Guildford League, and the beginning of considerable success for the Challoner club as well as for the Association, the taking on board of what was to be a considerable administrative talent in the shape of Graham Watts.

96/97

The start of the season saw the phenomenon that was Michael Chan 'take off' in his rookie year in the Premier for Aftermath. The 12-year-old, who was the number one ranked under 12 in England, beat both Creasey and Wild of Merrow A, and only lost out to Robinson two sets to one- it was significant that the Merrow trio were all 80% plus performers in the averages. Not since the heady days of Baker, Woodgate, Russel, Oakley... et al had we such a talent as Michael- another product off the 'Harden' production line.

The same report recorded a full house for Tom Taylor-Woodward, playing in the First Division for Challoner B, against a very good Bramley side of Jim Perry, Dave Ridgers and Mike Willimott. Tom is, of course, father of the famous Maria, and one of the founders of the Challoner club.

By the way, try as I might I could only find one Advertiser press report for the whole of this season-surely a fascinating historical fact in its own right.

Summer of 97 saw the delightful Maria and Lesley Taylor-Woodwood, together with Ken Lemon, and his lovely wife Margaret, organising the Presentation evening for the first time. Maria and Lesley were to prove a highly successful combination in subsequent years.

97/98

The Table Tennis Centre is finally up and running- ***"Reasons to be Cheerful"***

Steve Pinn took over Press during a period of extremely poor publicity for the Association, for whatever reason? This was to be his second stint; the first was '70 to '73. He is a professional journalist, and during his period in the 70's he worked at the Surrey Advertiser, specialising in Sports. A very lucky break for us! If you look at the coverage over this period, I think you would agree that it was outstanding. This time his input was absolutely crucial- he never let us down!

Steve began his tenure with a piece on the Percy Lawes, where Crispian Knight scored a maximum for Challoner C- promotion contenders in the First Division- over Aftermath C- Premier Division strugglers. It was interesting to note that, at this time, Aftermath had three teams in the Premier.

Steve, in another report, commented that “Many years of experience converted into an enjoyable evening for Norman Warner, John Oakley and Alan Osgood playing for Pegasus E, playing against Aftermath G, with a 10-0 result, to mount a significant challenge in the Fourth Division to early leaders Ash B”

In November the headline was “Ridgers shows he’s got the Knack”. David got a maximum playing for Bramley B against Pegasus A in a top of the First Division clash. Ridgers-he of the rock solid backhand chop from any position was like playing against a brick wall. David was a player I never beat, in many encounters in the Premier, in the 60’s. David played with Tony Miller during this period. Eventually I beat him in 2001, albeit that he had suffered a mild stroke sometime earlier. Even then it was only after a titanic struggle at deuce in the third.

December, and “Not even Mystic Meg could predict who will win promotion from the Third Division” Just eleven points separated the leaders Byfleet from eighth placed Cranleigh.

February, and a rather interesting confrontation between Alan Batchelor of Cranleigh, and Chris Lewis of Challoner, in the Third Division. Alan won the first 36-34- his unique side spin style having bemused more than one opponent in the past. He ran out a victor at 14 in the third. It should be mentioned that Alan was, for many years, the Association Photographer. This was before the days of the digital electronic gizmo which we have today. The photos were all of extremely high quality, and I have scrapbooks full of them-several are reproduced in this History.

Against all the odds Merrow A- Robinson, Fisher, and Ron Wild Beat Grid A 5-4 in a thriller in the Percy Lawes final, denying Grid the double. Haley won the Open Singles title from Phil Snelson. Linda Makepeace (nee West), another of my old girls, took the Ladies title from Maria Taylor-Woodward.

Merrow F was demoted from Division Two, despite getting a very respectable 84 points-that is an average of 4.2 per match. Quite unprecedented!

May, and the news of Percy Howard’s passing. A Vice President of the Association, and a very good friend to us over many years. For details of his contribution, through the decades, please read the Simpkin pages.

An interesting comment from Gordon Aplin, the first of several on the subject. Gordon commended the arrangements for Presentation Evening, but requested that the disco volume be kept down, to enable conversation, until the last hour of the evening. ***Patently the message has never ever got through-but there you go!***

98/99

The exciting news was the return of Glen Baker to the area, playing for Aftermath. He was to make a considerable impact on Guildford Table Tennis during this season. He began by taking a maximum out of last years champions Grid A, going through Bhalla, Holmes and Snelson in short order-as befits a former number ten in the National Rankings.

November, and the headlines was “Giants Tremble at Linda”-relating to Linda Makepeace’s success in winning the Ladies Singles last season, and her outstanding run in the Fourth Division, as well as taking all three out of a very good College Hill side when playing up in the Second Division as a reserve

Linda is one of the few ladies still playing from the 70’s coaching scheme in 2008. The others are my playing partners Kim Farminer (nee Merritt) and Kerry East (nee Merritt) from Pegasus and Angela Coventry (nee Rust) from Cranleigh.

December, and Steve Pinn asked us “Got your anorak on?” And stated that every match in one particular week in the Third Division had ended in a draw. “Ever happened before? Surely not!” In fact, the odds of this occurrence in six matches would be- I think- 1 in 4,502 or once every 204years. The proof needs knowledge of statistics, and specifically the Binomial Theorem-details on request! Curiously enough the odds of a drawn game are 4.0635to1.

Peter Millie and Alan Gess had an expedite ding-dong in the First Division, when Aftermath C met Ash A. Luckily ‘Ace’ International Umpire Harry Spraggs was present to oversee fair play. The result of this unusual occurrence-in this modern era- was a win for Gess 21-16 in the third.

Eric Maybank got a mention. At 91 He was leaving the area to be near his son in the Midlands. Playing for Bramley, then Merrow, Eric joined the league in 1954, and continued to play competitively until he was 73, although he played socially at Shalford until he was 88.

The big clash of the Titans- hailed by Steve as the clash of the two smoking barrels- proved to be a damp squib, when Baker beat Haley 21-13 21-16.

The enduring talents of Chris Lewis came to the fore, in taking all three for Challoner E against Merrow J, the Third Division leaders including Neil Cotterill, who had been riding high in the averages.

At this juncture I must say a few words about Chris, one of the real characters of our Association over five decades. I played with him in the 60’s for more than five years, in the Premier, and the Aldershot First Division, for Pegasus and Ash-we were middle of the table sides. Chris used to average around 50%, and always gave us 100% effort, giving even the top players a run for their money, with his two wing top spin game.

There were many good stories concerning Chris over the years. He could remember almost every detail of matches, with which he was involved, with unerring accuracy-even back 20 years. It was rumoured that he always turned up at anything involving Table Tennis with his plimsolls, just in case-even County matches! Chris, like Bill Marriott, was a great talker, and

it was unwise to engage him in conversation lasting more than a few minutes, otherwise you could be there for several hours. I have seen people, who obviously wished to be polite, standing there, with glazed eyes, trying to look interested-rather like talking to me I suppose!

The New Year and the Association suffered a savage blow when John Oakley died during a match at the old Pegasus headquarters in Stoughton. John- an Internationally Recognised Sports Journalist, who covered seven Olympic Games-put his heart and soul into our Association as Press Officer for seven years in the 70's, as player, coach, and helper in all things.

Stephen Pinn best describes John:

“Table tennis enshrines the virtues of sporting excellence, determination, and fair play. I competed against John on many occasions. He never failed to live up to those exacting expectations and ideals”

A poignant moment at John's funeral was when his son Mark quoted part of the famous Kipling verse. I repeat it here for you dear reader;

*“If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat these two impostors just the same;
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it
And- what is more-you'll be a Man my son!”*

Rudyard Kipling

Alan Thornton, the ex 70's star, made a brief return to Guildford Table Tennis for Third Division Merrow, but soon dropped out of sight again, as did Dave Gray, over from South Africa, who performed the odd miracle for title winners Ash in the 60's and 70's. In the current season Dave helped Merrow F to the Second Division championship.

March, and Grid A are unceremoniously dumped out of the Percy Lawes by Aftermath A 5-3. The main executioners were a rampant Glen Baker-one of my old boys, giving Ramesh more grief- marvellous! - With three, and two brilliant wins from Mick Hill over Snelson and Holmes. Unfortunately, a Cinderella ending was not to be, as Merrow B upset the apple cart with a 5-3 win over Aftermath in the final, with Baker unbeaten. Indeed, Baker had the last laugh, when he took the Open Singles, and with Mick the Doubles at the Annual Tournament. Grid easily won the Premier to round off an extremely eventful season for all.

99/00

Start of the Millennium season, and as well as continued first class press coverage from Steve Pinn, Dave Brown started, what would prove to be a highly successful magazine- *clearly our collective cup doth runneth over!* Dave also took over the Chair of the Association.

Merrow had cause to celebrate the coming Millennium, firstly Terry Haley joined Robinson and Fisher in the A side, to generate a formidable trio for the next seven years. The other piece of good news was the signing of Jason Tendler. In his debut match for the C side, in an early season clash, he beat Robinson and Fisher, only narrowly losing to Haley.

Another neat headline was “Watts turns up power to zap Grid” This referred to Graham Watts recording a maximum for Challoner A against Grid C in the Premier.

November, and another to meet the ‘Great Umpire’- this time Colin Browne, who made his debut for the old Guildford Wednesday in the 50’s, before starting up the highly successful St Lukes club in the 60’s. Bill Marriott said of his lifelong friend and playing partner.

“Colin was a fine sportsman and a gentleman; his very pleasant nature endeared him to all who met him”

The Guildford Association officially went on line this month. This very important innovation was instigated by Dave Brown and Son.

December, and Stephen Pinn posed the question “Was this the best ever?” The match was Grid A against Merrow B, with a 5-5 result. During the evening Mayur Majithia lost his unbeaten record to Phil Snelson, who scored a brilliant maximum on the night, including the doubles with Bhalla.

The New Year and Grid A’s hopes of retaining their Premier title were dealt a serious blow when Jason Tendler took all three, plus the doubles, for only a 6-4 result. It left Merrow A with a fairly healthy lead at the top. Such results seem to be the only advantage of not playing your strongest side from top to bottom i.e. strong club colleagues effectively taking points off the opposition. On the other hand, Grid took full advantage of Glen Bakers absence through injury, beating Aftermath 10-0-swings and roundabouts really!

Tendler was certainly the man to watch; as he proceeded to take a full house from club mates in the MerrowAand B teams- this included a demolition of Haley’s 100% record. Taken in

perspective this meant that he had taken a maximum from the three top teams in the league in the second half of the season –a truly magnificent performance. The service rule changes later on, however, did him no favours at all.

First week of February, and the headline was “Bayly block on Merrow procession” Merrow F were attempting promotion from the First Division, which would have meant five Merrow teams in the Premier next season. They disposed of main rivals Pegasus A, by a healthy 7-3 result. Then enter Ian Bayly of Aftermath-he of the long pimples both sides- who proceeded to take them apart with a maximum over Messrs Gray, Trill and Clatworthy- only 6-4 to Merrow. However, eventually they still won the Division. Bayly was something of an enigma, with his close to the table half volley style, coupled with the funny bat; he was always a hard man to beat, but never quite good enough for the big time. The introduction of eleven up saw him off, as, like several players, he just couldn’t get his head round the change.

Interesting stuff at the annual tournament as, in the absence of Glen Baker, Haley took the coveted Open Singles crown once more, beating club mate Mayur Majithia. Mick Hill surprisingly took the Hard Bat Singles from Bhalla, who had probably come to consider the trophy his own personal property. Maria Taylor-Woodward lost to Frimley’s Robert Brittan from the Fifth Division, in an earlier round of the Open, in a major upset.

Tom Harden celebrated his 65th birthday, with friends, from many local clubs. This was Toms 50th consecutive playing season in the Guildford League.

March, and Grid A resurrected their chances with four 10-0 wins in a row-their eighth of the season. This gave them a four-point advantage at the top of the Premier. This was almost wiped out the next week; when Merrow B took Grids unbeaten record by 6-4, doing their A side an enormous favour in the process.

The Grid A side, in their Pomp, were always able to grind out 10-0 results against the lesser sides, their strength in depth being a feature of their many successes. If you are going for titles it is no good having one weak player in your line up!

Merrow A rather rubbed salt in the Grid wounds by beating the ‘old enemy’ 5-1 in the Percy Lawes. But setting up a wonderful finale to the season Grid reversed this result in the league encounter by 6-4 in the penultimate match of the season, to give them a one-point advantage. Enter Jason Tandler for Merrow C to take another four points from the champions, which left Merrow A having to beat their B side by an unlikely 8-2 score. This they achieved, despite the best efforts of their team mates to thwart them- I attended this match, and am a bit vague as to who did what to whom, but it was a very fine match, and I do remember John Callcut being extremely upset at losing three very tight matches, the finish took me back to the 60’s classic between Ash and Enterprise mentioned previously.

The result, unfortunately, led to a bit of a daft rule change, to the effect that all intra- club matches must be played forward. A typical knee jerk reaction surprisingly passed unanimously at the AGM, without considering the ramifications of such a move-more of this later!

It was announced that the 40mm ball would be used at all matches, in the new season-the doom-mongers again having a field day, as is their prerogative I suppose. An even larger 'moan factor' was about to appear on the horizon, in the form of '11up' –*Ain't we got fun!*

00/01

Champions Merrow A got off to a 7-3 against their B side. Fisher losing all three.

If I might now be totally selfish, and include a report with reference to myself:

“John Diggens made his comeback for Pegasus C after a year sidelined through injury-tennis elbow actually. He inspired team mates Kerry East and Kim Farminer to a 7-3 victory over newly promoted Abinger B. Diggens win over Alan Gordon was a classic, ending up 20-22, 21-17, and 21-19 in the Pegasus veterans favour”-*what a poser! As my old mum used to say “Self praise is no recommendation!”*

December, and “Gould Festive Cheer” as Nick Gould, the Bramley Ace, brought festive cheer to the B side, in an 8-2 victory against fellow stragglers Ash C in the Second Division. He took all three including an 18 in the third against Sandy Simpson.

January, and the burning question was “Is anyone going to take Terry Haley’s 100% record?” Within two days back came the answer “Yes Indeed!” as first Tendler, then Majithia, both members of his own club, did the trick.

February, and “Maj-estic! Haley gets hammered”- as Mayur Majithia beat Haley by an unprecedented 8 and 10 in the Open Singles “In an awesome display of power and finesse”

March, and the headline was “Fisher pulls Lawes out of the bag” referring to his magnificent effort in defeating Phil Snelson 20 and 15 in the final confrontation to take Merrow to a 5-4 success against arch rivals Grid A in the semi-finals of the Premier cup. Merrow beat Grid B in the final by 5-1.

Almost certainly the event of the year, for the Association, was the National Veterans final in Kirkby. I have just finished reading Dave Browns write up, on our fantastic success in these finals. You really need to read it yourself to be immersed in the sheer excitement of it all-full report on application! The upshot was that Guildford took the title, with absolutely nothing to spare at all. Hats off to Ramesh, John Robinson, and John Callcut. There is a very nice photo of the Heroes in the colour section.

01/02

The beginning of the Dave Brown ‘Press Extravaganza’ His inaugural piece showed some promise “Lennie in the Family Way” About Lennie Lowe’s decision to drop from the Premier Division, to play with his 13-year-old son Adam in the First.

Dave always said that his early days as Press Officer were somewhat difficult. There were occasions when he didn't manage to get anything in, or it was viciously chopped- a fact that I noticed when trawling this particular period at the History Centre. This was a time when the Advertiser sometimes had only two pages of sport, and often half a page was taken up with a betting shop advert.

There was a mention of Dave 'Harry' Halfpenny, in October, in a cup match for National Grid. He scored a maximum in the victory over Merrow F. Harry, as we always called him in the 70's, is one of Guildford's Table-Tennis' real characters, one of the first to adopt loop shots on both wings-together with Gordon Grover. His casual style hid a deceptively match winning game, and it is my opinion that he is playing as well, at the time of writing, as 30years ago!

The passing of Ronnie Rees, at 70 years of age, was recorded in a moving obituary by Bill Marriott. Ron was a star in the 50's and 60's, winning the Men's Singles in 1961. A hard bat player, with an attractive two wing attack, he was a very popular man, and a member of the all conquering Enterprise team of the time. I remember him sounding off about the new rubbers; he considered they gave an unfair advantage.

In February, Jason Tendler got a headline. At this time Jason was probably the best player in Guildford, taking all three against the top clubs Grid, and Merrow fairly regularly. I never tire of watching him. An elegant exponent of the art of Table Tennis, he always seems to have so much time to play his shots. Jason was certainly at his peak during this period, winning the Open Singles in March.

MerrowA-Robinson, Haley and Fisher- took the Premier, despite losing 6-4 on two occasions to rivals Grid. However, Grid still managed the Percy Lawes.

At the AGM there was considerable argument, and discussion, and dare one say open hostility concerning the 11-up situation-much hot air ensued, and a no confidence vote in poor old Dave, as Chairman, was taken, and happily roundly defeated by 59 to 2-*surreal or what?* My own opinion on the matter was that everyone had a say in the proceedings, and players had a chance to vote on the situation. It all came to nothing in 03/04 when the World authority, the ITTF, dictated to the ETTA that 11-up was in - as the 'Frogs' would say, a 'fait accompli' (I actually nearly spelt that right first time), yield or pay the consequences- that is banishment from everything! The AGM finally decided on a compromise for the 02/03 season of KO Cups and senior tournament events being 11-up, and everything else remaining 'as you were'

Chapter 13 2002-2009

02/03

Dave made the point, in an early piece in the Advertiser headlined “It’s Tacticians Who Shine in Cups”-concerning the new 11-up system for Cups. That it obviously requires a new strategy, and that some players would have difficulty, initially, adapting. My own opinion on this and, indeed, the perceived wisdom, is that 11-up leads to earlier crises points in a game, and therefore a more exciting spectacle.

Another point of controversy was the new service rules-‘they’ seem to change the service regulations every year don’t they? Dave commented in his magazine that, whilst the new laws have very little effect at the lower levels, it certainly does at the higher reaches of Table Tennis, including our Premier. As always everything seemed to work itself out, with not too many ‘punch ups’ on the matter.

Considering that 50% of players probably foul serve anyway, I always found it irksome when some zealot-***you know who you are, and we know where you live!*** - take it upon themselves to follow the letter of the law, especially when I am having a very convivial evening with my girls, which suddenly turns sour because of it. There used to be a couple of teams, with an individual like this, who we knew would ruin the evening. In any case hardly anyone gets any sort of advantage in foul serving, particularly at the lower levels of competition. Strangely enough these people have, happily, disappeared from sight. We haven’t been bothered for some time now.

In October it was “Grid gets a Nasty Shock”. Anyone who has been Press Officer will know that you don’t get to write the headline-although the opening paragraph of the report will normally dictate the headline. The National Grid team have been a ready source of headline material for the Sports Editors of the Advertiser, as readers of this history and the scrap books will realise. The headline concerned the MerrowA trouncing of Grid A.

Another headline, worthy of note, was in November “*Alex has Rivals Feeling Pig Sick*” This referred to Alex Piggott of Woking LTC, taking all three against First Division leaders Challoner D.

“A bit of a family affair” is how one report could best be described. It concerned a Handicap Cup round in which the Taylor-Woodward’s Tom, James and Maria were edged out by 35 points against Farncombe C, trying to overcome a massive 302-point advantage. In the same report the Wells family Pam, David and Mark beat Cranleigh by 47 points. It shows how important family participation is in the strength of our Association.

January, and I don’t know, what is it with the Sports Editors and pigs? But yet another headline concerning Alex Piggott “*Hero Piggott Hogs the Limelight*”-wonderful! The reason for the headline is almost, but not quite, superfluous. Alex got a maximum for Woking LTC against Byfleet LTC in the battle between the lawn tennis clubs. He beat the previously undefeated Devesh Shete during this encounter

Just one more headline, then I promise I’ll give it a rest for a bit- “*Ash feel Cheesed Off for Now*” Concerning Pegasus’s Steve Cheesman’s maximum against promotion contenders Ash in a 7-3 result for the Stoughton based club in the First Division. ‘Big Steve’ is always an absolute delight to watch and, indeed, to play against. He has a lovely open style with one of the best two wing top spin attacks I have seen-*poetry in motion Steve!*

February, and an indication of the rise of National Grid B in defeating Merrow B by 9-1- This despite the inclusion of previously unbeaten Mayur Majithia. In the event they (Grid B) achieved the double, with a combination of Hill, Laws, Woodgate, and an enigmatic but brilliant Clive Payne –he topped the Premier averages-and was an out of town star that, like many others over the years, disappeared from the scene soon afterwards into folklore. This ended a ten year run of successes for Merrow A and Grid A.

The Open Singles title went to Terry Haley for, poignantly, the eighth and last time, beating team mate John Robinson in the final. John took out defending champion Jason Tandler in the last eight, and may have expected more from this success, but it was not to be-he has been so close on numerous occasions. “*Always the bridesmaid but never the blushing bride John?*”

The AGM and the deletion of the infamous rule 9.2 “All intra-club fixtures must be played forward” My note backing this deletion was as follows. “I have long thought that this rule is an affront to the good name of the teams involved, and to the spirit in which our game is played-it presupposes that clubs will fix matches, blatantly, in order to obtain League Championships. Personally, I have never found this to be so. The inter-team rivalry is such that ‘Match Fixing’

would be the last thing on player's minds. The present situation means; that some teams have to re-arrange anything up to three matches to conform, leading to a total lack of continuity and general flow of the seasons league programme.

This was passed unanimously, although I must say I find it strange that the original rule was also passed without opposition- I wasn't present, otherwise there certainly would have been!

03/04

In the October magazine Dave, with some relief I might add, commented;

“Well like it or not, we now have the 11-up scoring system, and am just pleased that the issue has finally been sorted out. I was concerned that we would lose many teams, but only a small handful went, and some strong opponents of the 11-up system have not given up-I am pleased for that”

Some players complained that there would be lots more early finishes. However, when one team was so much better than another an early finish was always possible, even under the 21 up system. In the event everything has settled down, with, and on average, the usual number of late and early finishes-moaners please take note!

A significant start to the season, and in the Premier, Challoner posted their intentions with a 6-4 win over Burymead A, last years' runners up, with Graham Watts undefeated, Robert Lemon two, and Shaun Robertson one. This was followed with a 7-3 victory over last years' champions Burymead B, and a 9-1 success against a strong Merrow B, thus thrashing three of the top contenders in successive matches. Shortly their march was halted when they came unstuck against Merrow A by 7-3 although Robinsons 100% record went to Lemon. Pegasus C led the Third Division, with Kim Farminer getting all three against Cornhill in a 9-1 success. In the Second Division Gavin Kemp suffered a rare defeat at the hands of the 'Awkward' Bill Matlock.

December, and John Callcut secured a 'Full house' in the 'Performance of the week' for Merrow B, against defending champions Burymead B -Burymead fielded their Championship side of Laws, Woodgate and Payne and won 7-3, but still a marvellous result for John.

The new year and, significantly, for other title contenders, Challoner A beat Merrow C, including Jason Tandler, 9-1.

February, and a new name on the Open Singles trophy, as Devesh Shete defeated a previous champion Tandler in the final, The honour was well deserved as he had previously disposed of Marc Burnham 11-9 in the fifth, in an earlier round, and Adam Laws in the semis.

Worthy of a mention? In the Third Division Pegasus C, my team, in a notable 'Double' year, beat Ash C 8-2 in their 13th straight win- ***never got a headline all year Dave!!!???***- Kerry and Kim came top of the divisional doubles averages to complete a nice season for us.

In the same Division the principal protagonists for the ‘Prestigious’ runners up spot-just joking Guys! Bramley D and Burymead E fought out a draw. The inspirational Gordon Mitchell- he of the immaculate classical defence –took all three. In the words of Linda Makepiece - “It’s like playing against a brick wall!”

April, and Adam Laws virtually handed the Premier title to Challoner, by taking all three off Merrow A in a 6-4 victory over the main challengers. Merrows despair was compounded when they, again, lost by the same margin to Challoner, to put the ‘New Boys’ in sight of the Championship.

In fact, Challoner achieved a fantastic double, when they beat Burymead B, in a wonderful final, in the Percy Lawes, by 5-4, in which Graham Watts took out Adam Laws in a pulsating final game, taken to the fifth set, only clinching it on the second match point. Having been at many of these occasions I have to say that this was probably the finest final ever.

May, and Robert Lemon, fresh from his team’s Premier successes, was called up for International duty, after being chosen for English Schools for a match against Ireland.

The AGM saw a visit from Alex Murdoch, the new ETTA Chairman.

04/05

September, and it was reported that Bramley were showing early signs of making a swift return to the ‘Big Time’ after being relegated from the Premier. Cliff Keen and Dennis Perrett helped the club to an 8-2 win over Aftermath, in their First Division opener. Cranleigh B began their campaign in the Fourth Division with a 6-4 success against Farncombe F. Stalwart Allan Batchelor -he of the wonderfully artful side spin game- took all three. Long time Association player, and administrator Gerald Stacey, weighed in with two.

October, and Alan Sherwin- master of the very tight backspin defensive game – got an excellent maximum for Aftermath D playing Ash B in a 3-7 reverse for Aftermath. Harry Spraggs and 13-year-old Ross Saxby, with, father Ian, turned out for Ash- Ross was certainly one to watch for the future.

November, and it’s that man again, Glen Baker’s back in town. Turning out for his old club Pegasus against Merrow B – taking all three, naturally! in a 7-3 success. Unfortunately, Glen soon disappeared from sight soon afterwards, once again.

December, and a mention of Colin Henderson, husband of Sue (nee Howard). Colin met Sue when she was on international duty in the 70’s. He was the squads PE instructor. Colin, a

Premier star from that era, and a member of the Burpham title winning team, is a brilliant exponent of the top spin game on both wings, although he once told me that he hated playing good choppers. In something of the twilight of an illustrious career Colin won two, when turning out for Challoner in the First Division, against College Hill.

February, and Merrows hope of the Premier double were crushed by Rob Lemon's three for Challoner, in the Percy Lawes- a final result of 5-4 to the holders. Challoner were, in their turn, defeated by a similar score in the final by Burymead – Ramesh took out Shaun Robertson in the fifth, in a thrilling finale.

April, and the sad news was that we had lost Harry Spraggs, at the age of 73 years, whilst, would you believe, playing the game he loved so much. He had played in the Guildford and Aldershot leagues since 1970, after a long stint in the powerful East London and Essex leagues. Harry was one of the finest exponents of the reaction blocking game I have seen, with wonderfully angled returns. He was a nightmare for players who played a fast top spin attacking style, particularly good juniors. At one time, it was rumoured, that he used to play four nights a week in various leagues. Until age dictated otherwise Harry always played in the top echelons of the league. He was an accomplished International Umpire and Referee. He became a National Umpire in 1959 at the first attempt. Probably his highest achievement was to officiate the 1991 World Men's Singles final in Chiba, Japan, between Jorgen Persson and Jan-Ove Waldner- Persson won on this occasion.

Harry was a very thorough and well organised man-as an accountant should be- and he made notes on all his opponents for future use. He was also a very well-liked man. Dave Brown, in his Obituary, commented that ***“Harry would probably be checking the height of the net, and wiping the dust off the table, in some celestial tournament at this very moment”***

05/06

A fresh season and a new face in the Chair, that of Terry Haley who obviously wanted to see what life was like on the other side. Unfortunately, due to personal problems, Terry had to resign soon after, with Tony Laws taking over.

October, and Gordon Mitchell, Tony Bartlett and Richard Green-anxious to regain their Second Division credentials after last seasons relegation-won their first three matches in fine style, opening up a powerful lead in the Third Division, which they never lost. Class will always tell!

Just before Xmas Graham Watts suffered the first of his debilitating illnesses. Without going into detail the wonderful news is, that at the time of printing of this history, Graham, with great courage and fortitude has made a full recovery, and is playing as well as ever.

January, and Challoner, despite being without Graham, took three successive victories in the race for the Premier title. In the Second Division title battle the march of College Hill came to a halt, when Aftermath C beat them 6-4. Bill Matlock proved unbeatable taking all three. Bill, with his 'Funny Bat' combination, and extremely awkward style, has proved a graveyard for many fine players. The 'Hill' eventually won the title by a wide margin from Godalming.

March, and the tremendous effort of Challoner, in winning the Premier title, after the loss of Graham half way through the season, is worthy of note, revealing their strength in depth. The title was in doubt right up until the end, until they clinched it by two points from Burymead B. This despite a manful effort by Burymead A, who secured no less than six whitewashers over opponents in their campaign, and a 6-4 result against their main rivals towards the end. Much credit is due to David Lloyd, who filled the number three spot for Challoner, with distinction, for the latter part of the season.

The AGM and the men in grey suits had got together-Jack and me actually-and the result was a brand new Chairperson-to use the PC speak-one John Callcut. In the words of Dave Brown, who should know "An excellent choice?"

06/07

October, and Kerry East won all three for Pegasus B against Bramley C in a draw in the Second Division. Kerry, with Sister Kim, have been performing in the league, with distinction, for well over 35 years. *"The Girls have been an absolute delight to play with, these many years, and time has not diminished their Grace, Elegance and Beauty" I have leant on the French language fairly frequently in this History for inspiration and their "Je ne sais quoi" fits the bill exactly as far as Kim and Kerry are concerned.* For the mentally challenged out there it means *"A certain something" -JRD*

New recruit Koray Ozcan made an immediate impact for Merrow A, being unbeaten in the 'Percy Lawes' against Challoner C. Woking LTC were causing something of a stir in the Third Division, with 'Old Stagers' Brian Hartles, and Steve Conquest, ably supported by Koenigsburger the Younger-Danial. They were to win this division by a 'Country Mile'

November, and a mention of the marvellous Margaret Thornton, turning out for Ash D in a handicap cup match against Cranleigh B. She won all three and the headline was *"Thorn is Way too Prickly"* Mention should be made of Margaret's team mates, on this occasion Roy Benfield and Brain Lunn. The team typifies the sort of week by week commitment to the Association from the lower Divisions, which we utterly depend upon, and without them we would be totally lost.

December, and Trevor Spraggs-Son of Harry-won the Handicap Tournament Singles title for the second year in a row. If one analyses the history of this event, you find several instances of serial winners, that no amount of handicapping can prevent-Peter Palmer was another example. You need a certain style and technique and, indeed, talent to succeed at this sort of competition.

March, and a read of Dave's latest magazine, number 32 actually, and it struck me what an absolutely superb job he makes of it. It's always packed with interesting comments and discussions and, as an ex lecturer, with one of my subjects as the Industrial Application of Statistics- I find his Table- Tennis statistics corner fascinating.

April, and another 'Awful' headline- I didn't really mean it Chris, honest! ***"Matt Finish Puts Gloss on Thriller"*** Matt Pernet edging it at 17-15 in the fifth in the 'Percy Lawes' against Merrows John Robinson, to clinch the double for Burymead B.

End of the season and the major news was the demise of Jack Dawson, after a long illness. John Callcut wrote a superb obituary. For the record, in this history, some highlights are appropriate;

"Jack was Association Secretary from 1981- 86 and served for many years on the Surrey Committee. When Busbridge, for whom he played, amalgamated with Godalming Cricket Club, he persuaded a lot of cricketers to take up the game, and was soon running 12 teams. Like many Engineers, Jack was a Chartered Structural Engineer; he was a brilliant organiser with a scientific mind, which led to considerable experimentation with bat rubbers.

Trevor Free spoke of his calm authority, and wry sense of humour, a man with a clear understanding of procedures and clarity of direction- ***"The Engineer coming out again, seeing things as they really are!"-JRD.***

But perhaps Carole Ingram best sums it up when she says that;

"Jack was a modest man, who spoke very little about his achievements. He was an excellent coach and reader of the game, a true sportsman and a gentleman"

07/08

November, and Kim Farminer recorded a maximum for Pegasus, against Bramley in the Second Division, in a 35-year career best performance – ***again, why no headline Dave?*** Kim took out Mike Willimott- no less! Linda Makepeace and Joe Melchionno.

December, and the headline was ***"Bark Quality Rubbing Off"*** Dave wrote "The description of Table Tennis, as a sport for life, was spectacularly demonstrated in a recent Fourth Division clash. Three generations of the Barkham family, comprised the winning Godalming H side over Bramley D by 7-3. There was Grandfather Keith and dad Kevin, who were unbeaten, with son Sam, still learning the game, finally having to bow to his older relatives.

March, and the annual tournament run, in his normal immaculate style, by Graham Watts. Probably remembered as the 'Bhalla Year'-fully documented earlier- but also significant for a

magnificent victory by junior Fei Fei Pei in the Ladies Singles, against previous, serial winner, Maria Taylor-Woodward.

May, and Presentation evening where, in an emotional atmosphere, President Jack Harrington was awarded the 'John Oakley Trophy' for his contribution to the Association over 60 years. Later in May, and the depressing news was the death of Terry Haley, with throat cancer, at 47 years old. He won the Guildford Open Singles on no less than eight occasions, not quite equalling Harrington's nine championships. A superb exponent of the modern game, Terry was ranked, at one time, in the top 50 in England. His playing achievements, during a lengthy career in Guildford, are very well documented in this history. Terry was a product of the 70's coaching scheme, and was encouraged by Derek Rust to pick up a bat as an eight-year-old. His enthusiasm for the sport, and life in general was always huge. He had a tremendous send off when many people: family, friends, colleagues, playing partners and team mates attended the funeral and wake. The words of 'Stairway to Heaven' played by Led Zeppelin still haunts me.

This is for you Tracy and for all who have lost loved ones;

***Death is nothing at all
I have only slipped away into the next room
I am I you are you
What ever we were to each other, that we are still
Call me by my old familiar name
Speak to me in the easy way which you always used
Put no difference into your tone
Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorry
Laugh as we always laughed
At the little jokes we enjoyed together
Play, smile, think of me, pray for me
Let my name be ever the household word that it always was
Let it be spoken without effort
Without the ghost of a shadow on it
Life means all that it ever meant
It is the same as it ever was
There is absolutely unbroken continuity
What is this death but a negligible accident?
Why should I be out of mind?
Because I am out of sight
I am waiting for you, for an interval
Somewhere very near just around the corner... all is well
Nothing is past; nothing is lost
One brief moment and all will be as it was before
How we shall laugh at the trouble of parting when we meet again
(Canon Henry Scott Holland 1847-1918)***

Here follows a tribute to Terry by David Hannah:

I first met Terry back in 1974 at the Burford junior 2-star tournament. I had only just started playing competitively and Terry was already a strong player. It was the beginning of a great friendship and covered countless hours of playing and travelling to national events.

As juniors our local league was a very important stepping stone, and we played regularly in the Leatherhead league for Chessington and for Abinger in both the Guildford and Dorking leagues. Those years forged lasting memories for me, particularly those in the Guildford league and our 'friendly' rivalry with the Burpham, St Luke's and Pegasus teams.

As we left the junior ranks we began to play in National tournaments and travelled to those in Terry's newly acquired mini. He had passed his test (as with most things he did it was before me!) and became my official chauffeur / sparring partner.

As well as Table Tennis we shared a love of music, and often went to concerts in London with Max Crimmins another Surrey player. On one occasion (pre Glastonbury camping) we went to see Led Zeppelin at Knebworth armed only with a black bin liner! We obtained tickets via another old Table Tennis friend Steve Holloway who persuaded us to go on the Friday night before Saturday's event. Upon arrival we discovered there were no B&B's available, no pubs open and no last train to London! So our only option was to camp out in Stevenage under some bin sacks we had 'bought' from someone! Least said it was one of a number of hare brained ideas we had. There are also many stories of last minute hotel bookings going wrong, turning up at tournaments on the wrong day! Plus, many great nights out. Our paths parted around 1980 when I started playing for Scotland and was rarely at home. I did have a short reunion with him at the National League side Fareham and was pleased to see he had lost none of his ability.

I thought a lot in the days after his funeral about the good times we had and the positive effect Table Tennis had on, not only our lives, but those of our peer group. For this we have to thank the coaches and organisers like Mike Kercher and John Diggins for their energy and dedication. Terry's family were always very supportive and it was not unusual for us to be collected by Ron (Terry's dad) at midnight in Sutton having missed the last train home again (not a short drive from Cranleigh!) No loss can be greater than theirs, but they should be proud of themselves that they helped him become the loved person he was by so many. It is only in sad times like this, when friends gather, that the measure of his popularity amongst so many people was obvious. He should be remembered as a great example of those people who love the game, not only for their results, but for the lasting friendships made.

Another great loss to the Association was Paul Spicer who performed, with distinction, for Weyburn, in the lower divisions, for many years.

08/09

The start of yet another season, and we see balance and total equilibrium in the league with five Divisions, with exactly 12 teams in each

October, and the husband and wife partnership of Angela and Peter Coventry, a rarity in local Table Tennis, turned out for Cranleigh A in the Third Division, and forced a draw against Ash C. Both teams were considered front runners in the title chase. The headline, believe it or not, was **“Ash Get Sent to Coventry”** In the Premier Division newly promoted Godalming took out Challoner C 10-0 to signal their intent. Alaine Choo-Choy, Michael Chan and Hannas Weiss were the executioners. Unfortunately, their challenge soon petered out as they were, for various reasons, unable to field a consistently strong team. This begs the question as to who is going to stop Burymead B doing the double yet again-for the third year running!

It is now December, and as I sit typing this, any serious challenge to their domination in the Premier has melted away. Merrow A, BurymeadA, ChallonerA have all fallen by the wayside, even at this fairly early stage of the season, and I have to say that it is a bit like the Manchester United situation in the football Premier, where one is tempted to present them with the various titles, even before the season gets underway. Much of the Burymead success is down to an extremely strong squad-Pernet, Hill, Tanner, and Patrick Beckley. But, more significantly, is the role that the fifth member of the squad takes of manager, and occasional player. Dave Solman is an ex Chief Superintendent of police, and brings his organisational skills to the table as it were. In a triumph of youth over experience 12-year-old Helsham Weerasinghe took out the high rollers of Godalming A. It is worth pointing out that Helsham and his father travel from Dartford to play in our Premier Division, because of its strength in depth. **“May the Force be with you Young Skywalker?”** December also saw Association Chairman John Callcut winning the Handicap Singles at the Annual Handicap tournament. I must say that it is nice to see the top players participating in the handicap events once again. Just like the good old days from the 70's

January, and the Third Division was producing a real ding dong, with nine points covering the top five teams. In fact, half the matches played in this division produced 5-5 or 6-4 results.

February, and it was wonderful to see Mike Deasley, back after a long absence, turning out for Cranleigh in the Fourth Division. He does'nt seem to have lost his touch as he took all three against the youngsters of Godalming G.

March and the headline was “Harden's 60th season salute” as **“Our Tom”** celebrated sixty years of competitive play in the Guildford League-marvellous! -follow that if you can. Ken Lemon oversaw a successful transfer to the new sports hall. A magnificent arena! Matt Pernet took the Open Singles title this year but it might have been a case of last years' success of Ramesh Bhalla, the oldest ever winner of the competition, being followed by the youngest, as Matt

scraped through, in a last 16 clash at deuce in the fifth against 'Wonder kid' Helshan Weerasinghe the number one England ranked junior at under twelve. This after losing the first two sets. Matt has one of the finest mental attitudes I have ever seen in a player. He never gives up no matter what the odds against him are, and I have seen him in several really tight spots. Another battler is Maria Taylor- Woodward who took the Ladies crown back from Fei Fei Pei. Her seventh championship win. She was a little nonplussed when I told her that Pat Fry had actually won it 13 times, but thought she would give it a go anyway.

April, and yet another death in our family, Allan Batchelor of the Cranleigh club. A person who has been instrumental in enhancing the pages of this History, and indeed the 'Advertiser' with His superb photographs. I leave Stephen Pinn to continue the Obituary;

“Allan was a quiet unassuming man, but with a wry sense of humour, he was always courteous to a fault. He was blessed with a unique style of playing which many opponents found impossible to counter. He and Gerald Stacey began playing for the, then, Ewhurst club in the 60's before joining the Cranleigh club-a partnership and friendship that remained constant to the end”

Stephen and I attended the funeral at Cranleigh Parish Church, together with friends, family and team mates-it was a moving affair, and all Allan's numerous children, and grandchildren had balloons, which were released after the burial. He will be sadly missed.

Yet another loss was that of Simon Peters, who like Allan died before his time. Simon was an extrovert, a colourful character who enjoyed life to the full. His style of play typified the Man, a back from the table long range defence, with tricky spin from all points of the playing arena combined with a penetrating offence when required. He was always a pleasure to play with, and I enjoyed our frequent encounters immensely.

Burymead B secured a rather, depressing, routine double when they took the Percy Lawes by 5-1 over Merrow A- the only resistance being from John Robinson. Probably the most exciting thing happening in the Premier this season was the scrap to avoid the drop between: Challoner B and C, Merrow C and D and Ash A. The process involved a two hour emergency meeting of the Management Committee, at season's end, to resolve a conflict between two of the combatants, "Spirit of the Game and Tolerance" were much over used terms in the various emails flying about, together with the actual discussion on the matter, apparently ***-see my comments about Committees in the final chapter.*** Needless to say I ducked out of this one! Ash went down, and Challoner B and Merrow D had to play each other for the final relegation spot, as they were locked together level on points. In the event Merrow just pipped Challoner 5-4 to retain their Premier status. Unfortunately, due to the success of Merrow E, Champions of the First Division, Merrow will field five teams in the Premier next season to produce, in my opinion, a rather unbalanced situation.

An amazing result in a revamped National Men's Team competition-the Willmott Cup-was that Guildford teams finished one and two in a final that went to the wire. Michael Chan and Alain Choo-Choy, backed up by Andreas Pusch were the victors, with Matt Pernet and

Marc Burman as runners up. Feifei Pei and Lucy Burks lost out in the final of the Junior Girls competition-the Bromfield-to a strong Derby side. All in all, quite a coup for team organiser and manager Tony Laws. Just another proof that the Guildford Association are one of the Top Outfits in the country.

The Presentation Evening saw the newly endowed 'Terry Haley Cup' for 'Most Promising Junior' being won by Scott Gotham; Tracy Haley presented the award. ***Terry would have been delighted!*** Members of the Association featured strongly in the Surrey awards list; Dave Brown; 'Trevor Channing Memorial' for services to League Table Tennis in Surrey. Feifei Pei; 'Jim Forrest Trophy' for outstanding junior performance for the County. Tony Laws; Charles Bourne Trophy for outstanding service to the County'

Chapter 14 Some Afterthoughts and Final Comments

“Last night I saw upon the stair a little Man who wasn't there, He wasn't there again today, oh how I wish He'd go away”- WILLIAM HUGHES MEARNS

I must say, that at times, I tend to ramble a bit, I suppose this is normal for someone of my age, you tend to repeat yourself, and keep harping on about the past. Please forgive me if that is

how you perceive me. My long time friend and golfing partner, Bill Marriott, could bore for England, as I often told him, and I always vowed that I would never get like that- but there you go! ;

“O wad some Pow’r the giftie gie us

To see oursels as others see us!”

Rabbie Burns 1759-1796

Perhaps I am entering my second childhood and must remember the words from:

1 Corinthians 13: 11

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

This chapter is fairly lengthy, as I am attempting to tie up a number of issues, and don’t want to miss anything out if I can help it. I have spoken at some length about individual players, and their various styles, but as the heading of this chapter suggests perhaps a few last observations on this matter. I will entitle it “Exciting Players I have seen” although as John Robinson would have it ‘Exciting’ is probably an overused word, but if you have seen: John Millward, Ramesh Bhalla, and Michael Hill, and currently Alain Choo Choy striking the ball with awesome force; or Steve Davis’ fantastic backhand drive; or the brilliant Derek Holman with his wonderfully deceptive reaction game, you may re-appraise this statement. By the way John Millward is a great story teller, particularly when he has had a few pints.

Mike Fisher is another case in point. He has been around an awfully long time, with considerable success I might add- he is now well past his prime- but if I was to choose the player that gave me, over the years, the most entertainment value in ‘Ping’ it would have to be Mike. I have described his game as eccentric, but with spectacular genius, and I have seen him ‘Take Out’ the best in local Table Tennis, during a playing career which spans some 45years. Mike has much the same languid (relaxed) style as Istvan Jonyer the 1975 World Champion, who created so much fear in the hearts of the Chinese and Japanese players in that era. The style depends, much of the time, on long range shots with massive spin and accuracy. Also lots of anticipation-for big men both Mike, and Jonyer were very quick around the table.



A youthful Mike Fisher, ever the “Ladies Man” with Jayne and Sue

Richard Tanner is another very effective player, his timing is superb, and he always seems to be in the right place at the right time – tactically, with John Robinson, probably the best there is.! The Elegant Jason Tendler is a player of considerable visual appeal. Then there are the more conventional stars such as Adam Laws and John Robinson, whose two wing counter hitting styles are unsurpassed in local Table Tennis. I always found Graham Watts well worth watching, he has a lovely ‘Classical Style’. The ‘New Breed’ of players such as Rob Lemon, Shaun Robertson Adam Brewer, Matt Pernet and Ross Saxby are also very impressive to watch. The choppers are worth a mention, as there is still no better sight in Table Tennis than Modern offence against Classic defence, particularly at local level. Cliff Keen, Gordon Holmes and Barrie Gilbert get my vote, in yesteryear it would have been Tony Miller and Basil West.

On the same theme of ‘Interesting Local Players’ I must mention those in the Association whose standard never seems to diminish with age; There is Gordon Aplin (to know him is to love him) -he of the educated backhand- now into his seventies, who is playing, in my opinion,

as well now as 30 years ago. Ron Stacey, another septuagenarian, with his beautiful two wing attack, is another case in point. Ramesh Bhalla, of course, is an exceptional case of this phenomenon. Dave Phelps is a further example. He came on the scene as a junior in 65/66 taking local Table Tennis by storm with his, then, modern loop and kill style. He still maintains a high standard of competitive play in the Premier. There is another side to Dave, as for many years now he has entertained us as the lead singer with 'Chips' at Presentation Evenings.

Our revered Chairman, John Callcut, is still playing as well as ever, even as a Zimmer frame beckons. But to be more serious 2008 was a bit special for him, as in Rio de Janeiro, in an over 60's group, he beat the eventual champion Jaroslav Kunz, a former top 25 World Ranked player. In winning the 'Plate' event he took out Herbert Neubauer, seven times World Vets Champion. This proves that "Table Tennis is a sport for all and a game for life"

The subject of 'Funny Bats and Magic Rubbers' have stretched our intelligence and imagination for some time now. I remember Dennis Neal- England's number one at the time- losing to some obscure Chinaman 21-4 in the 1977 World Championships in Birmingham. The reason? Different rubbers same colour and twiddling under the table. This was akin to Richard Bergman and Marty Reisman, favourites to win the 1952 Worlds in Bombay, being rendered totally incapable by Hiroji Satoh, an unattractive unknown Japanese player with, at the time, unplayable sponge on his blade. Another example was the John Hilton success in the 1980 European Championships, as a 1000:1 outsider, using same colour rubbers of different types. The big joke at the time was; that he was number one in Europe, number two in England, number three in Yorkshire, and number four in Leeds YMCA

I can only conclude that the members of the International Federation, over the years, have either: been total incompetent; complete idiots; or more realistically in the pockets of the manufacturers of the equipment. The arbiters for the game, the ITTF, have been responsible for the equipment, and gluing up farce which we have today. Mike Willimott reliably informs me that, at this time, there are no less than 1000 different types of rubber on the market at anything up to £40 a sheet. All this of course stems from trying to overcome the ridiculous situation, in the early days of Table Tennis, of two players patting the ball over the net to each other for hours on end, with little result or spectacle. We have lurched from one extreme to another, the only result being to enrich the large industrial enterprises involved-remember Peter Buttle from yesteryear.

The bat and rubber technology, which has led to the daft prices which are charged today- bearing in mind that in 1955 I paid 4s 6p for a Johnny Leach bat- is analogous to the con that is perpetuated on the general public by the purveyors of Rolex and Cartier watches, Champagne, Chanel, so called art like the Picasso rubbish, and that £450 driver, which the manufacturers of golfing equipment assures you a 30% increase in length-the cost the same as my entire set of clubs with trolley. That is, paying well over the odds for a product because of the marketing hype-the ploys and promises made on its behalf. Buy this rubber and you too can become a Champion! In Quality Assurance the definition of Quality is "Fit for purpose and Value for money"-what price the old Xmas stocking bat with sandpaper covering? -think about

it. Obviously poor old Peter Buttle never did-God rest his soul. Peter was a wonderful character, and one of those rare people that you could depend upon no matter what, unlike the, so called, art experts and marketing people.

Remember the Hans Christian Andersen tale about the Emperors invisible clothes. And the comment of the little boy- it is one I have often used as a College Lecturer, and in day to day living- ***“The Emperor has no clothes on!”*** It was, as I recall, a little bit more theatrical in the Danny Kay version. – give me a ring sometime and I will sing the whole thing to you if you like. The whole premise is, that there is no real substance in any of it, a marketing myth, a triumph of Branding rather than good taste. When you get the situation of style over substance you are truly lost!

To put the whole thing in perspective; fortunately, 95% of us just get on with it. You won't find Premier Ace defender Gordon Holmes complaining about the cost of rubbers, and speed glue, he still gets a 70% average with a 20-year-old bat! Luckily big balls, service rule changes, bat and rubber changes, lack of television coverage don't seem to affect most of us, we just go out for a nice social evening.

One area which merits some comment, and discussion, is that of sportsmanship. When I was Press Officer (67-70) I wrote a piece on the subject, which I repeat verbatim, names have been changed to protect the innocent:

“Unsportsmanlike behaviour takes many guises. Beware of the character who, on coming into your facilities; a) complains about his bad back b) complains about the light c) complains about the floor and general surrounds d) says how badly he has been playing recently. Have you got the message? You are on a loser whatever happens, if you win it is due to factors a), b),c)and d).If he wins then it is because he has magnificently overcome all these factors, indeed against the odds, thus making his victory all the better, and you of course feeling much worse because of it.

More insidiously, however, is the sort of player that habitually bemoans their lot. They spend all evening carping about an edge ball, or a net against them at an early stage of a game, indeed if the event occurs later on, or at a crucial point, they are incandescent with rage, blaming all and sundry. The fact that all edges and nets, over a period, balance out seems to escape them- as Basil Fawlty would say ***“A glimpse of the bleed'n obvious”*** Much of the time this is either the actions of a naturally unbalanced character, or more often the John McEnroe syndrome- people who create aggravating situations in order to gain advantage-not as uncommon as you might think. Such players are guilty of blatant gamesmanship, attempting to gain advantage by totally unfair means”

I must say that nothing much has changed, the majority of players still exhibit a high degree of sportsmanship, honour and integrity, whilst a small minority are guilty of such outrageous behaviour and gamesmanship-call it what you will-that they should be ashamed of themselves. The problem seems to be that nobody wants to confront these cheaters, and let us be clear that

is what they are. Their fellow players take the view of “Anything for a quiet life, and lets not rock the boat lets not make a fuss” In fact anything rather than confront the issue.

In order to lighten the moment a little, what fool said ***“It’s not the winning and the losing it’s how you play the game”*** Oh that was me! – certainly a motto for losers, but more seriously it should never be winning at all costs- you should win because you are the better player, not because of some trickery.

A rather amusing spectacle is the player who goes bananas when they win, the elitist syndrome typified by the Chinese, who punch the air after every winning shot-now I must admit to times when I have had a victory against the odds, and been quite pleased with myself, and a mild Yes! Has sufficed to celebrate the win. But the unedifying exhibition of a player screaming like a Banshee (For the uninformed this is ‘A female fairy in Ireland who wails and shrieks before a death’) punching the air, with cries of “Good Boy” and “What a marvellous player I am” and generally behaving like an idiot, is a bit over the top, as well as being terribly un-British don’t you know! In extreme cases these individuals have been known to put their shirts over their heads, and run round the table. Surely only footballers, and those ‘Foreign Johnnies’ do that sort of thing-what is the Country coming to?

So let us look at ourselves, and be generous and gracious during play, who knows you might be awarded the ‘Sportsperson of the Year Trophy’ Something like the following:

“Oh my word what an extremely fine edge ball that was, at deuce in the fifth too, that’s the third this game, I wish I could do that, what a delight it is to see you in action, you really have a very good eye for the ball don’t you” Or, indeed “What a magnificent net, what absolutely splendid play, a positive joy to watch, I believe that was for the match, you really deserved to win, the very best of luck to you” and again, “What an incredibly lucky win I have just had, you really deserved to beat me, perhaps another time, I feel very guilty taking the point for our team” -Get the idea!??

There are a million stories in the naked city, and this has been one of them!

Another aspect of all sport, including ping, worth exploring, and just for the laughs, and your general entertainment, is that of how one approaches the impending confrontation is it a) confidently, and with glorious optimism b) abject pessimism and doom. I have always favoured b) myself, and I am sure you will want to know why, being the inquisitive sort that you are. This is an article I did on the subject for an ‘In House’ magazine many years ago, still very relevant today I believe:

“For many years, during the summer and spring of a not unhappy life, now well into autumn, I found that the best policy was always to think that nice things never happened. If you repeated over and over to yourself ‘No way will such and such happen’ sure enough it did. On the

occasions when there was a 99.999% chance of something good happening, and you naturally entered into premature celebration-singing and Morris Dancing on the green, and all that sort of thing- sure enough one was doomed to disappointment.

I could catalogue scores of instances which proves this extension of 'Sods Law'. Girls being asked out on dates with hope and expectancy in your heart, such hopes being cruelly dashed with replies ranging from an off hand 'I'm washing my hair', to more specifically 'Get lost creep, or stream off with a great intensity!! There were major interviews when all seemed well, ending in 'don't ring us we'll ring you'. On the other hand, all this was normally countered with; the odd cheque put through the door-completely unexpected; the win on an occasional raffle, all against the laws of probability. There was the instance of you, poor slob, asking some fantastic girl out, without a hope in hells chance of being accepted, and low and behold "I would be very pleased to!" This after spending hours walking the streets, hoping to bump into the vision of loveliness. "Oh my word, fancy meeting you, what an extraordinary coincidence. I wonder, if you were really hard up and desperate, if you might come out with me" But there again years later I met Anna my Wife- definitely the prettiest girl in the class!"

What is the point of all this chat you ask, pleasant as it may be? Well, I have found over the years, on balance, that if I went to a match full of confidence, bursting with energy and well being and thoughts of "All three tonight" inevitably you lost to the guy who is bottom of the averages, as well as the other two, result- nil pois, or, sweet FA, for the evenings efforts-what a let-down!

I always seem to have more, perceived, success having convinced myself that any sort of win, by me, was highly unlikely. On entering the match venue you then go through a routine something like: "Hello Dear Boy, I was wondering whether to play at all this evening, considering your current form, I just hope I can give you some sort of game, perhaps a handicap might be in order- ha ha! Anyway, what an absolute privilege it is to be playing you, I really am a great admirer of your technique, and perhaps I might pick up a few tips during the evening" The result of all this banter was, more often than not, all three, plus the doubles, for yours truly! -Jean West always used to warn her team mates about me and my routine.

Another little story which you may find amusing. One of my great pleasures, as I approach my dotage, is to attend Premier matches every week. Although you may consider that I have a twisted sense of humour I must relate the anecdote which gave me one of the best laughs that I have had for years. It involved Mark Handcock, who was one of my boys from the 70's. Mark developed into an extremely fine player, with an excellent record in the top flight.

Anyway, in this particular match, some years ago, Pegasus, with Mark, was playing Burymead. I noticed that he was wearing what looked like carpet slippers, or even ballet shoes. Now imagine for a moment Mark, who is a big lad, in this type of attire. Being naturally of an enquiring mind I asked as to why this was. It appeared that his normal trainers were in the garage waiting ceremonial burning. Naively I pressed the point. Mark, apparently, the previous week had played at Ash, and during the evening wished to use the facilities- I must explain that in order to do this you have to go outside and round the building, for some reason which now

escapes me. On re-entering the Table Tennis room Mark noticed an unpleasant pong-yes you have got it in one, he had stepped in something unmentionable, to do with the canine species. When he got home no amount of vigorous scrubbing would remove said pong. Now perhaps a psychologist could explain why, but during that evening, I almost had to be escorted off the premises due to the convulsions of hilarity that I suffered, the tears rolling down my face, indeed, even as I type, I find myself chuckling at the imagery. If you think enough about it, and picture the whole thing, you may well end up like me- a gibbering wreck -whatever turns you on I suppose! Mark, as you read this, please forgive me for telling the story-it is my fond hope that you still look on me as a mentor, and wonderful human being!!!???

A sad regret of mine is the demise of the Pegasus club, my club for some 40 years. At its peak, in 1978, it mustered no less than 17 teams, now, at the time of writing, no more than two remain –whatever happened?

What may have been missed by many, including myself, is that we have two genuine celebrities in our midst. Dave Greatorex, who plays in the Premier for Challoner and Graham Norton in the Second Division also for Challoner. They are World Ranked exponents of the ‘Rackets’ competition, for those who excel at all four racket Sports-Table Tennis, Squash, Tennis and Badminton. It’s called Racketlon. Dave and Graham are ranked in the top twenty in the World-photo in the colour section!

Next a few lines about the role of committees in the general scheme of things. In my working career it seemed to me that I was never invited to serve on many committees, simply because I always had the rather unsettling habit of telling it how it actually was -call it the ‘Emperors New Clothes’ syndrome if you wish -***Remember “The truth will set you free”*** Who actually said that? - answers on a post card please. I’ll put you out of your misery it was ***JC*** of course! -No! No! No! ... not our beloved Chairman you fool!! John 8; 31.32.

My other major problem was that I never suffered fools gladly-still don’t! Having served on the Association committee for many years, I think I can safely say that I have seen it all. I can recall midnight endings to many meetings in the 60’s and 70’s. Luckily it’s now two hours’ maximum. I have seen enough hot air produced, in my years on committees, to solve the world’s energy crises. I have experienced endless, mostly pointless, discussions on a whole variety of issues. The arguments going round and round, being constantly repeated until I want to scream, when in most cases the solution is plain to see, unfortunately, as in life, there are always individuals with a total lack of logic and good sense. It is at this point, I suppose, I must repeat the old adage of mine it is what, I’m sure you will agree, I am good at “How to Win Friends and Influence People” Give me a good old fashioned benevolent dictatorship any time-***providing it’s me of course!***

Remember the committee who wanted to design a horse and ended up with a camel. The Coaching scheme in the 70's would never have been set up in the form that it was, if I had listened to the committee at that time-20 different reasons why we shouldn't do this and that-I found this sort of attitude a great trial in my Career but overcame it by doing it anyway. I remember dear old Miss Allison saying "Perhaps we could purchase a table this year, and maybe one next year if everything goes alright". Mick Noble wanted me to run the thing as a sort of youth club, with consideration for the physically and mentally challenged. Laudable as this was it was far removed from my ultimate aim of an elite group of youngsters.

In the event I more or less went my own way in the matter- getting donations from all and sundry, twisting arms here and there, obtaining premises and generally making a nuisance of myself. Rather naively I set up a coaching committee with, would you believe, youth members of the scheme serving on it-not a great success!! The scheme had literally scores of different awards to cater for the top juniors, down to beginner stage, yet I still had Lynne Dowle demanding to be asked to compete in my Invitation event, this despite the fact that she had a lorry load of awards to come. Clive Bromfield, an outsider, won the Boys Invitation and the next year went to Ted the Chairman demanding that he be allowed to defend his Title-What did he think by invitation meant for Gods sake!! The problems I had with junior ranking lists beggared belief. I had so much interference with what I wanted to achieve, that I put a stop to it-indicating that if they didn't like it I was leaving. In the words of Francis Alberto Sinatra- "***I Did It My Way***" and considering the results we achieved, I think it must have worked.

Now, of course, we have the vexed problems of political correctness. The amount of time and effort required in setting up a scheme with children involved: risk assessment, insurance, health and safety, police vetting. Jobs for the boys, more committees, more Paperwork-It was why I was more than happy to leave my lecturing post. It is my considered opinion that the benefits to our youngsters are minimal, they lose out due to the lack of adults wishing to participate in activities, due to all the hoops that they have to go through- our scheme in the 70's, some 80 youngsters would have never got off the starting line under the current situation.

John Robinson, in general conversation, said to me "***I hope you aren't going to upset people John***" to which I replied "Of course I am!" In my three score years and ten, and a bit, I have experienced virtually the whole range of human behaviour and frailty. One area that still never ceases to amaze me is that of some people's overwhelming generosity or, indeed, others, total lack of it. I once had a Head of Department who, on the many occasions that he was invited to luncheons for Industrial Courses that I ran, would when faced with the plate that I used to take round for tips for the waitresses put his hand in, and move it about a bit-I often wondered if he actually took money out. I eventually ended up, to save embarrassment, saying "I'll stick a quid in for you Harry"-he never refused my offer-his meanness was legendary. Our deputy head, Fred, never carried money on him-just like the Queen-so you could never get any money out of him for things like people retiring, or buying his round. In the writing of this History I have experienced the whole range of reactions to my entreaties for financial assistance from, a writing of a cheque for two hundred pounds on the spot to "I'll think about it" when asked for a paltry £7.50, up front-the basic cost of this history (actually heavily subsidised) from players

who have been around a long while, and who are, I know, extremely well off. Then there was the pretty well known player and administrator whose reaction was “I suppose I can download it off the Internet” Then there was the lady whose boyfriend is another well-known player who said “I expect the team can buy one copy and pass it round”-marvellous! There’s no accounting for folk I suppose. In some cases, you could see the sweat standing out on their foreheads. I could hardly have expected a worse response if I had asked to spend a night of passion with their wife. It is particularly galling when I have spent two years, and some 2000 hours on the History, and oh dear me! In excess of a Grand of my own money-oh well whose counting. Thank God for the more than generous, lovely, people who are definitely in the majority?

Rather like the sportsmanship thing meanness is something that nobody seems to want to address-rather like me in the work situation- what do you do with somebody who never buys his round for instance? - Chris Lewis used to take himself off to the toilets when it was his turn. There’s really no excuse for it. The only saving grace is that even Scrooge eventually had a change of heart. Fat chance for most mean people I have had contact with over my life. Some of the most generous people I have met, both with their time and money, have had very little in the way of resources. The definition of a Meany by the way is ‘An ungenerous, ungracious, small minded person’. Did you like my new English term by the way ***“Generositiely Challenged” is surely better than “Mean Bastard”***

Now let me pose a question to you-who was the finest player ever to have played in our Association? In my various chats with you over the years, and my own experience on the matter-I suppose I am one of the few people still alive to have seen them all in action- the short list comes down to Jack Harrington, Tony Miller, Dave Wellsman, Glen Baker, Mark Oakley, Dicky Clode, Ramesh Bhalla, Terry Haley, Adam Laws, Jimmy Moore, Terry Bruce, Linda Howard, Sue Howard, Brian Wright, and David Hannah. And the winner is –David Hannah? Who was, in the mid-eighties, ranked in the top 100 in the world, and in the top three in England, as well as being number one in Scotland? But is this necessarily true? As when I broached the subject with a group of you, Graham Watts made a very valid point as to “Is National or International ranking necessarily the only criterion for this sort of accolade” At least it makes for a very good, if possibly heated, discussion amongst you all. In fact, David’s pick is Linda Howard!!

As I write, the actual 75th Anniversary will soon be upon us, the celebrations will be shared by many overseas visitors to our dinner and dance, and tournament. Over the years there have been many overseas tours by Guildford players: to Merville in France; to Anhausen in Germany; to Hungry; to Malta; and to the Channel Isles-Guernsey and Jersey; in years gone by the Isle of Wight tournaments were a regular tour venue.

Bit of advertising: I hope that you may continue to use Sue and Barry Chapman of Bribar for your equipment requirements. They are long term sponsors of the Handbook. They were the only sponsors of this History from the Supplier faction-the other six did ‘not even bother to reply to my request.

I really have enjoyed working on this history for you. The project has filled many happy hours of my time for over two years. I have interviewed many people, and cajoled many more for scraps of information-press cuttings, minutes of meetings, anecdotes, stories and photos and of course money, in fact anything of interest to you Dear Reader. If I have succeeded, then much of the credit is due to the fantastic amount of help that I have received. Please forgive me if I have given myself a mention rather too much, put it down to poetic licence if you will. ***I was never anything more than a fairly mediocre player and, to a large extent, like to bask in the reflected glory of others-so there you have it! -As Clint Eastwood once said "A man has got to know his limitations" This is me being humble you appreciate!***

As the song goes:

Oh Lord it's hard to be humble

When you're perfect in every way

I can't wait to look in the mirror

'Cause I get better looking each day

To know me is to love me

I must be a hell of a man

Oh Lord!!!!!!

From scratch I have tried to master word processing-still only a few words a minute. I have entered the dark worlds of: spell checks; electronic storage of data and files; creation of tables; backing up of material; photographic storage; printing of hard copy; not to mention emailing; pdf; interneting and all that entails. Then there is the problem of losing the file, and spending two F!!!** Hours trying to find it again.

Graham Watts has been of immense help in the combining of the Ted Simpkin book, with my material, to create the 75-year History, as well as other computer related problems. As for things like 'Justification' well Graham Watts has just shown me how-good job he's not charging for all this advice.

The term "***You ain't seen nothing yet***" surely must have related to the world of chip nano-technology which enabled me to put this book into a memory stick, for back up, and prior to printing, which I can hold in the palm of my hand. The world of Science and Technology never ceases to amaze me. They used to boast about putting your name on a grain of rice. Scientists can now put several; bibles onto a chip the size of a pinhead.

I suppose *William Blake* in his poignant *Auguries of Innocents* best sums it up in the opening lines;

To see a world in a grain of sand

And heaven in a wild flower,

Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,

And eternity in an hour.

In several instances I have said “Information on request”. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time to discuss any relevant matter, I can also, of course, provide you with copies of the pertinent information.

I hope that you may continue to use Sue and Barry Chapman of Bribar for your equipment requirements- they are long term Sponsors and Supporters of this Association.

I will end this dissertation with the words of an earlier contributor to this history, Dave Gilham, you may remember it:

“Talking and writing about Table Tennis makes you realise just how many good times you can have being involved with the game, and sometimes take them for granted”

With so many oppressive joyless regimes in the world today, whether politically or religiously motivated, it is essential to live life to the full in our free democratic society.

Remember that:

“The glass is half full not half empty, and a generous spirit is the most precious thing that anyone can possess”

The French Language always seems to have good sounding words to say on the important aspects of life. I love:

‘Joie De Vivre’

It seems to sum up my own philosophy of life, it means of course

‘The Carefree Enjoyment of Life’

*It involves: Good Food, Good Drink, Good Music, Good Company,
Good Sport, A Generous Spirit and most importantly a Great Lady
to share your life with.*

In the words of the immortal James T Kirk

“Beam me up Scottie!”

Apparently he didn’t actually say that, but what the heck! It’s as good a way to sign off as any.

I must also quote from Kirks sidekick Spock

“Live long and prosper!”

God bless you all, see you on the table!

*As the Chinese would say ‘May you live in interesting
times’*

“Last one to leave put out the lights”

John Diggins x 2009

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