

# A BRIEF HISTORY

## **Wokingham Tennis Club, Wellington Road, Wokingham, Berkshire**

Wokingham Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club was set up in 1923, playing at Wellington Road, Wokingham on 4 grass courts and 2 singles courts for juniors with a small wooden pavilion. The club was flourishing in those days and played friendly matches with other Berkshire clubs.

In 1931, the tennis club amalgamated with the cricket club and Mr Leslie Sears had 2 hard courts put down which were hired out to the public. Mr Arthur Belcher rented the courts initially for his own use.

There was naturally a decline in sporting activity during the war years and what little tennis was played seems to have been based on 2 hard courts off Barkham Road near Tanhouse Lane.

In 1937 Croquet Club was dropped from the title.

In 1940 new red shale courts were laid on behalf of the cricket club by Mr Leslie Sears. These were paid for by the cricket club and hired out to the public.

The tennis club lease commenced in 1951 when the courts and clubhouse were in a terrible state, Mr Arthur Belcher took on the lease when he lived in Albert Road. The courts were initially for his own use, but he hired them out when people became interested. At that time, there were 2 semi-hard courts and space for 3 or 4 grass courts with a wooden hut in poor condition. To keep tennis members interested, a table tennis club was run in the winter months at the Hope and Anchor.

Mr Belcher moved to Kestrel House, Barkham Road, which heralded a change; players decided to form a club and take on the lease under the name of Kestrel and Wokingham Tennis Club. By 1957 there was a club championships and teams were included in the Berkshire Leagues from 1958 – 1982 under the name of Kestrel Lawn Tennis Club.

In 1965 the new pavilion was erected next to the tennis courts. The room was large enough to continue the table tennis interest and was used on a regular basis for league matches.

In 1983 there was a hint that the cricket club wanted to sell the land and move to Cantley which created a dilemma for the tennis club as they were in financial difficulties and also had a 25 year lease. The move did not materialise, but to reduce the rent, the tennis club reduced their area and moved to the station end of the Wellington Road site.



The tennis club once again became known as Wokingham Tennis Club in 1984 and was supporting both adult and junior play.

Numbers began to dwindle during the 1990's until Manor Tennis Club, who had played at Cantley, joined Wokingham in 1997 at Wellington Road.

The shale courts and surrounding area were well maintained by Ken Park and Mike Harper for many years.

Several teams took part in the Berkshire leagues, but there was little opportunity for juniors to play as the courts were in need of serious work.

Another merger took place in 2007 when Woodley LTC whose numbers were decreasing, joined Wokingham for club evenings and also combined teams in the Berkshire leagues. This merger for matches improved the levels of the teams and the numbers at club sessions. Having two venues for matches was also a bonus when there were two home games.

After 40 years of trying to move to a larger site, the cricket club finally sold the land at Wellington Road for development and a brand new state of the art facility was built at Sadlers End, Sindlesham.

Wokingham Tennis Club was included in the planning and on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2012 moved into a lovely large club house overlooking 4 porous tarmac courts. Members of Woodley Lawn Tennis Club joined Wokingham at this time.

## Woodley LTC, Silverdale Crescent, Woodley, Reading, Berkshire 1925-2012

Woodley Lawn Tennis Club was founded in 1925 or 1926 by a group of friends playing on public grass courts in the middle of what is now known as Woodford Park. The actual date is not recorded as the first Minute book is missing but comes from a report in the Reading Standard of July 1962, when at Finals day founder members were interviewed. The earliest remaining Minute Book records meetings from 1933 to 1954. In 1933 the membership stood at 22 and subscriptions were 10/- (50p).

The first recorded match was away against Peppard Hall in June 1934 with a return match two weeks later. In these early days the club set great store on social events such as dances and entertainments. The club did not meet during the war but in 1946 a meeting was held to decide whether or not to resume activities. The 22 members present agreed to restart and the club reformed using the same two grass courts in the park. The subscription for adult members was still 10/-.

In 1955 the land in Silver Fox Crescent was gifted to the club by Mr Ben Clark, the club President, and trustees were appointed to administer its care. Two courts were built at a cost of £507, payment aided by a 50% loan from the LTA. Some of the surrounds work was carried out by members and fund raising activities became critical for the ensuing years to help pay off the loan and improve the facilities. A men's team was entered into the County Leagues for the first time in 1956. A pavilion costing approximately £320 was built and opened in March 1958. Mr Ben Clark became President of the County LTA in 1959.

By 1962 membership had risen to over 100 and a long planned third court was funded with help from a grant from the National Playing Fields Association, a loan from the LTA and member contributions. The members also worked on the surrounds and the new court was duly opened in May 1963. An Interclub team was entered into the leagues in 1964. Over the following years the club slowly expanded mirroring the growth in the size of Woodley. In 1975 a ladies team was entered in the County Leagues for the first time. By 1976 membership had risen to 160, 94 seniors, 48 juniors and others. In May 1980 a pavilion extension was opened and a 50<sup>th</sup> tournament played. Membership stayed relatively constant for a few years but a steady decline was recorded from 1982.

It was decided to look for new premises in the mid-1980s but despite a number of possibilities no attractive alternative was found. In 2007 the club began to share some social events with Wokingham Tennis Club and then to enter combined teams in the County Leagues. The 22 remaining members finally abandoned Woodley's facilities at the end of 2011 and the existing members joined Wokingham Tennis Club at their new venue.





## Work in Progress 2011



## 2012

The club was officially opened by TV personality Matt Allwright on 1 July 2012



## December 2013

Floodlights were installed at the club funded by club monies, a contribution from Woodley LTC and an interest free grant from the Berkshire LTA.