

# **A History of the Grove Lawn Tennis Club**

*compiled by  
the following sub-committee:*

**John Miley (Chairman)  
Margaret Percival  
Katy Swarbrigg**

## **Preface to the electronic edition 2017**

Since resigning in 2015 after ten years as Chairman, I have taken on the leisurely, honorary and non-committee role of Club Historian.

As it is approaching a quarter of a century since the History was written in 1994, the Committee decided to update the History and put it on our Club website.

Updating comprised:

1. Some additions to the original text from material that has come to light since the first edition. To distinguish this added content, it is typed in italics.
2. A new chapter, *Towards Fifty Years*, that covers the period from the first edition up to our half centenary celebrations in 2009. Colour photographs are included in this chapter.
3. Listing key events that have happened since 2009. These can be easily updated as we move forward.
4. Updating the winners of the various trophies from 1994 to date.

The Reflections of a number of members in the first edition have not been included as many of those members may not be known to the present membership. They and the prefaces to the original History can of course be read in the printed edition.

The Committee would welcome contributions from members, past or present, who can add to the text, particularly in the early years when information is scant.

Graham Cure

Chairman 2006 - 2015

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*Speech by John Miley delivered in the clubhouse on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1995 at the launch of the History*

*Fellow Members, Associates and friends.*

*I suppose I should not, but I feel kind of proud of the history we have produced, however it could not have been done without the help of a lot of people.*

*First of all Margaret, Katy and I have been historians for two years, but we are deeply indebted to the Club's permanent historian who has, among many other things, kept a record of who won what for the last 26 years. I mean of course the man who saved the club in 1970, Bill O'Brien.*

*The next person I want to thank is Bill Flynn, the designer. If he had only designed the cover he would have done a great job but he did much, much more and I am afraid we may have tried his patience particularly in the later stages.*

*Next, I want to thank the Printers, Wood Print Craft Ltd. They have done magnificent work and it is a mark of their modesty that their name does not appear anywhere in the text. Eric Ring was great as their front man and I thank him for his organisation.*

*Now I come to our oldest contributor, Archie Bolton who provided valuable information regarding the Castle Tennis Club. We are delighted that Archie was able to make it here tonight.*

*Next I wish to acknowledge the wonderful contribution of two people who sadly passed on after we talked to them. Pam Stack was one who also helped us with facts about the Castle Club. The other was Owen Kavanagh who provided tremendous information regarding the move from the Cricket Club to here. Without Owen I do not believe we would be standing here this evening and he opened his heart and his memory to us. We are delighted to have his wife Annie with us this evening.*

*My next appreciation must be a bulk thank you to all the others who contributed memories and reflections. We cannot single out any of them but when you read the history you will know to whom I am referring.*

*At this stage I should make a special reference to the Howard family. We are delighted that some of them are present. Pat Howard was another man but for whom we would not be here tonight.*

*Finally I come to my two fellow history committee members, Margaret Percival and Katy Swarbrigg. When I cast my mind back over the last two years I am struck by how much they did*

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## GROVE LTC

*in comparison with me. Katy started the whole enterprise when she suggested at a club committee meeting that we should write this history. Among other things that she did was to spend hours and hours summarising the minutes of the club. Two of the things that Margaret excelled herself in were typing many revisions of the text on her Word Processor and collecting valuable photographs.*

*Not content with finishing the history these two wonderful girls have made all the arrangements for this evening, including the refreshments and have organised the sale of the history.*

*We hope that most of you will hazard the good value the price of £5 represents. I have read it myself from cover to cover and I reckon it is a jolly good read for the price.*

*Margaret, Katy – I thank you both from the bottom of my heart for what you have done and we have here a small token of our appreciation.*

*Thank you.*

*The cost of printing the History in July 1995 was £3725.*

*A letter of thanks was received from James Brewster, Tennis Ireland, an invited guest.*



# Beginnings

Although the Grove Lawn Tennis Club, located at Grove Avenue, Malahide, opened in 1959, its origins are linked with two earlier tennis clubs in Malahide, both of which are no longer in existence. These were the Castle Lawn Tennis Club and the Malahide Junior Lawn Tennis Club. All three came into being because of restrictions on membership of Malahide Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club.

The Castle Lawn Tennis Club, Malahide was founded about 1923. Its home was at the Malahide Cricket Club and at one time had 95 members. There were three courts originally and at a later date a fourth court was added. Archie Bolton, a past Secretary of this Club, recalls the time when this fourth court was being laid. The groundsman, a Mr Thompson, gathered a few helpers one week-end, and armed with spades and assisted by a horse and cart they went to the marsh land near Yellow Walls. They filled the cart with sand and within one week the new court was completed and ready to play the following season. The club had only Adult Membership and no Sunday play was allowed.

Lord and Lady Talbot were very interested in the tennis club and they resented two trophies each year and eventually two perpetual trophies for Ladies and Gentlemen. Archie Bolton won the Men's Championship in 1927 defeating Stanley Savage in the final. Another member at that time was Pam Stack who won the Ladies Singles in 1930 and 1932. Pam's niece, Berry Harrold and her family were for many years, prominent members of the Grove Lawn Tennis Club.



Archie Bolton, Jack McCready and Stanley Savage.



1927 – Malahide Castle Tennis Club. Final winners Sheila O'Brien and Archie Bolton

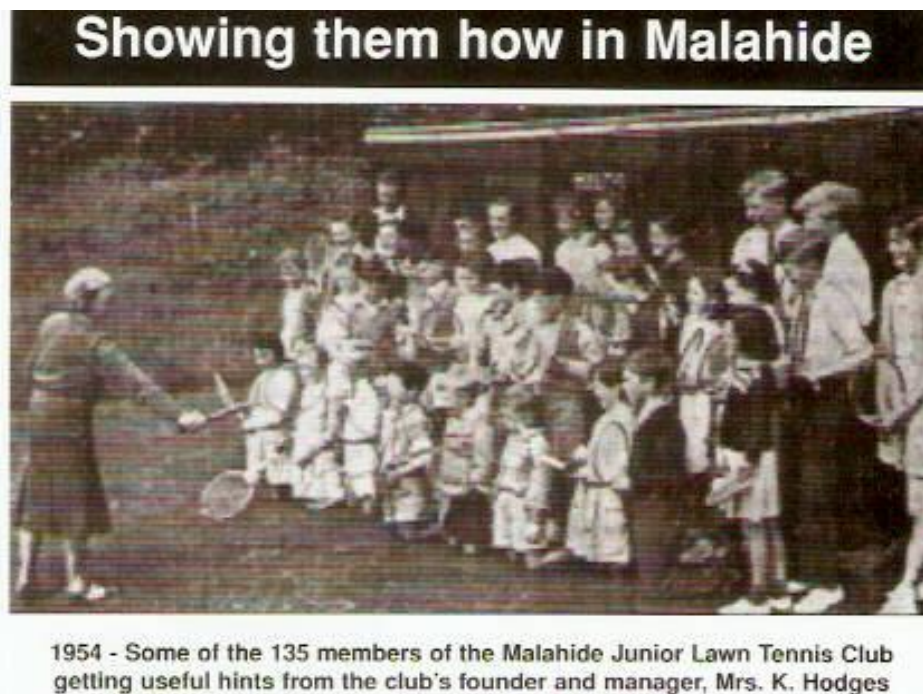
## GROVE LTC

In the early 1930s this Club moved to a site behind Woodlawn where four courts were laid and a clubhouse built. Information about this period is very scarce but it seems that the Club operated here for about four seasons and then closed completely.

During the 1940s, thought to be about 1946, the Malahide Junior Lawn Tennis Club was formed. It was the brain-child of Mrs Kitty de Carte Hodges, who had discussed the idea of a junior club with Tony Robertson and Louis Hughes who were leading lights in the Cricket Club at the time. Like the Castle LTC its home was in the Cricket Club grounds, near where hockey is now played, but in this club membership was restricted to those under 18 years of age. Mary Clarke (nee Burgess) recalls that when she joined there were only two courts. Later a third court was added and later still a fourth court was laid. Two crates used for importing car parts were donated by Mary's uncle, Tom Falconer. One of these was used as a 'pavilion' and the other was used to house tennis club equipment.

Tennis at this time was played from Monday to Friday with the nets put up and taken down daily. Play was also governed by cricket matches and on Tuesday evenings only certain courts could be used because of cricket practice. On Friday evening the posts were also removed so that the courts could be used as part of the outfield for the week-end cricket. The only time tennis players were allowed into the Cricket Pavilion was for the annual 'At Home' tea.

The groundsman was Patsy Nugent and the Treasurer was Billy Goodwin. However Kitty Hodges appears to have done all the organising, coaching and supervision herself. She is remembered as being strict but popular and ruled the Club with an Iron Hand.





## GROVE LTC

Inter Club matches were arranged with Bettystown and Donabate and on two days each year the Members were allowed to play in 'The Square' (Malahide Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club) Open days, for an American Open and a Semi-Open. Michael Nugent Snr and Bernadette O'Rafferty (nee Burke) played together in these events and usually won. Mary Jones (nee Wright) remembers the satisfaction felt by Kitty Hodges when her protegees were successful. On one occasion Michael won a shooting stick and Bernadette a decanter. Michael and Bernadette also played in the Irish Open in Old Fitzwilliam and the Leinster Open (under 15).

It is a mark of the versatility of the whole operation that the Club played an annual cricket match against a team from the Cricket Club!

Towards the end of 1958 Kitty Hodges decided to retire from the Club. As the location of the Club had been negotiated by herself personally, on her retirement the Club ceased to exist. She was concerned that the children would have nowhere to play tennis when she retired and she approached Eoghan Kavanagh who arranged a meeting in the Library on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February.



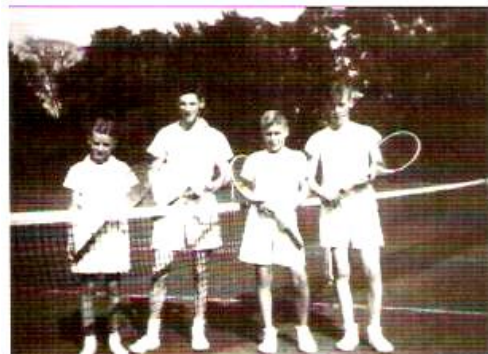
1953

Back Row l. to r. – Sean Colgan, ----- Anderson, Bernadette O'Rafferty (nee Burke), Mary Colgan, Eimear Dignam, Mary Jones (nee Wright), Maureen Bell.

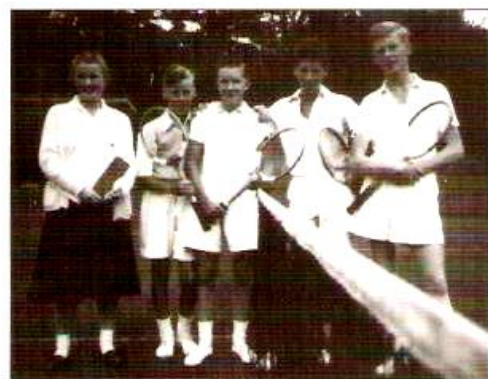
Middle Row l. to r. – Les O'Shea, Irma O'Shea, ?, ----- Leonard,  
Mrs. Hodges, ?, ----- Mills.

Front Row l. to r. – Denise Smith, Declan Murphy, ?, Mary Clarke (nee Burgess),

# picturesque



Finals, 1957.



1955 Boys Doubles Final  
L. to R. - Romilly McMahon, David Mahon, Brian Kearns,  
Jim Thompson, Terry McCabe.



1956 Semi-Final  
L. to R. - Teresa Jones (Nugent), Romilly McMahon, Mary Clarke  
(Burgess), Jim Thompson, Michael Nugent (Sen.).



1956 Mixed Doubles Final Harry Michael Cup.  
L. to R. - Rita Foley (Nugent), Joe Connolly, Romilly  
McMahon, Jim Thompson, Mary Clarke (Burgess).

Kitty  
Hodges



L. to R. Mary Clarke,  
Teresa Jones, Les  
O'Shea, Mary Jones.



1952 - Conal Burgess and Billy Goodwin outside  
the pavilion.



# Early Days

From founder member Eoghan Kavanagh we learn that the inaugural meeting of what developed into the Grove LTC took place in the Malahide Library on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February 1959 and each person present contributed £1 towards a fund for initial expenses. Mr Leo Fogarty was elected Chairman.

There followed an extensive and difficult search for a suitable site for this new tennis club. Eventually, Mr Pat Howard, who was at that time planning building development (the present Grove Avenue), agreed to set aside a portion of his field for the Club's use. The Club is indebted to the Howard family for this.

Mr Eamonn Crowley, solicitor, (Crowley, Bolger and Cusack), who was a member of the Club's founding committee, was asked to look after the legal requirements of obtaining a tenancy. Later Mr Crowley and the Chairman advised the committee that the Club was in a position to develop the site.

On 8<sup>th</sup> April 1959 development commenced, the work being undertaken by Eoghan Kavanagh, Tim Cremin, Jim Connolly, Archie Bolton and Tom French, among others.



Commencing work at Grove L.T.C. L.to R.: Eoghan Kavanagh, Páid O'Keefe, Dick Thompson, Tom French, Tony French.

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## GROVE LTC

On 13<sup>th</sup> April 1959 the equipment, including the huts, belonging to Malahide Junior LTC was moved to the present site. Courts were marked out on the hill, but no grading was done at this time.

*The initial heavy digging and rolling of the two lower courts was done by Dermot Moore, a local builder, who also fenced the area. At this time there was no clubhouse, just the two crates moved from the Castle site. The grass was cut somewhat irregularly and as the field was also, on occasions used by youngsters for playing football and rugby and invaded by cows that took a shine to the rich grass, the bounce must have been very dubious.*

*In the early 1960s, the two upper courts were added. There was also talk of a further two courts where 18 and 18A Grove Lawn were later built, but these courts were never marked out.*

Tom O'Sullivan, Mr Howard's architect, discovered that Aer Lingus had a building which was no longer needed and he acquired this for the Club. This building was transported to Grove Avenue on a lorry and was erected by a team of enthusiasts. The construction started on the Grove Avenue side of the site. When it was about half way up, Dermot Moore, the builder, reported that the residents were objecting to the structure being so near to them. Dermot came in with his equipment and his men, took down what had been built and re-erected it to the same stage at the present site.

This clubhouse still remains, some 35 years later. After the completion of the pavilion an official opening was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1959 with PJ (The Bishop) Burke TD and other dignitaries attending.



Eoghan Kavanagh turning the first sod at Grove L.T.C. in April, 1959.

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## GROVE LTC

The courts remained ungraded until Bert McColgan of the Social Welfare Department reported there was a JCB in the locality and suggested borrowing this machine to grade the site.

This proved to be a major undertaking as apparently all the turf was removed before grading and replaced afterwards. During the course of this work the JCB hit a 13" drain coming down the hill which caused a flood. However the work was finally completed.

At this time the Club was sadly lacking in finance and substantial fund-raising was necessary. Among those who figured in this aspect of Club life were John Geddes and Mannix Smith who organised dances in the Claddagh which was on the site now occupied by Supervalu. John Geddes also ran some impressive firework displays on a wreck in the estuary.

Luke McCabe of the Grand Hotel was a great supporter of the Club and made Hotel facilities available for fund-raising ventures. It was noted from the minutes that, for many years, Committee Meetings also took place in the Hotel.

The following newspaper report appeared on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1961 in the Dubliners Diary in the Evening Press:

"The juniors of Malahide, that elegant and well-dressed suburb of Dublin, have formed the Grove Lawn Tennis Club, and with their own hands have built a little pavilion, which cost them something over £300.

With about £150 still to pay off the cost, they are running a dance in the Grand Hotel, Malahide, next Wednesday night ..... dress, of course, for a guinea. I am indebted to Mrs Brian Magill, one of the seniors of the organising committee, for the information. This, the newest tennis club in the country, has a potential membership of almost 200".

At this time mothers took it in turn to supervise the children, bringing a chair to the club each day to sit on. The courts were only open from 2 pm to 6 pm for the months June to September.

Mannix Smith recalls that he, John Geddes and Geoff McAdam used to meet almost every evening during the season and around this time the first parents' section was formed.

During the years 1968 to 1970 the Club appears to have been busy, especially at junior level. Junior boys and girls teams were entered for the Inter Club League competitions. Despite lack of facilities in the Club the teams rose to the challenge of home matches with an enthusiastic spirit and made visiting teams very welcome, providing refreshments at these events.

Junior 'Hops' were held in the clubhouse to the music of Brian and Alan Daniels, Charlie Biggar and David Ingoldsby. These functions, as well as providing some badly needed funds for the Club, appear to have been very successful on a social level. Senior Hops were also run as well as a Dinner Dance in the Grand Hotel (the second organised by the Club) which was attended by 120 people at a cost of 35/- (£1.75) per person.

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## GROVE LTC

The pavilion was kept in 'fit condition' by the ladies and the grounds were maintained by the committee and members under the guidance of Kevin Mahon (Treasurer), who worked tirelessly for the Club. It is noted in the Minutes of 28<sup>th</sup> March 1968 that a spade lent for the work on the courts by Paul McKay, had suffered a broken handle. Compensation was to be decided. It appears to have taken until 14<sup>th</sup> July 1970 to settle this payment. No amount was recorded.

By this time the Club had a team of groundsmen, namely Barry Pitcher, Colm Cowan, Dermot Pitcher and Alan McAdam who were to be paid £3.15/- per week to be shared.

A rota of supervisors was organised by Mary O'Herlihy, to do duty during the afternoons. The ladies of the Club also organised some fund-raising events such as Cake Sales and a Jumble Sale.

However at the AGM 10<sup>th</sup> April 1968, the Chairman, Des O'Reilly, commented on the rapid decrease in membership, the lack of interest on the part of parents and the impossibility of obtaining toilet facilities. In view of these points he suggested that the in-coming committee seriously discuss the possibility of closing the Club.

The topic of toilet facilities recurs throughout the Minute books and it was to take about twenty years more before they were installed.

Despite the foregoing worries and the lack of funds, the members seemed to get a great amount of enjoyment from the Club. One major topic for discussion during the summer of 1968 was a barbeque. There were two main problems (1) wood for the fire and (2) policing the grounds. However by August 30<sup>th</sup> the junior committee members were able to report that enough wood had been gathered and sufficient volunteers had been organised to police the grounds. Tickets costing 6/- (30p) were to be sold prior to the event and the amount of food decided upon was 20 chickens, 14 dozen rolls and 3-4 lbs sausages.

The event was extremely successful and the junior committee members were complimented on their organisation.

At the AGM of 27<sup>th</sup> January 1970 it was reported that the Club was going through a difficult period. Social and Tennis functions held during 1969 had not been well attended and subscriptions had fallen from £114 to £64. It was decided to call an Extraordinary General Meeting for 16<sup>th</sup> February 1970 and at this meeting to propose that the Club be closed down.

The Extraordinary General Meeting was held in the Grand Hotel and was attended by approximately 30 people not all of whom were members of the Club. Mr Goeff McAdam proposed that the Grove LTC should be wound up. This proposal was seconded by Beeny Bono, but Bill O'Brien, seconded by Peggy Burke, moved a counter proposal that the Club should continue. This counter proposal was put to the meeting and carried.

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## GROVE LTC

A committee was then elected as follows:

Chairman, Bill O'Brien; Treasurer, Arthur Brady; Secretary, Barry Pitcher; Ordinary Members: Bill Burke, Michael Bruce, Alan McAdam, Colin Cowan, Jr., Tom O'Flaherty, Mary O'Herlihy and Beeny Bono. Bill O'Brian was to remain Chairman of the Club until 1986.

The greatest problem facing the Club now was how to attract new members.

Intense canvassing by Bill O'Brien and Goeff McAdam took place. *Between them they knocked on the doors of many houses in Malahide where they saw children's cycles and other toys in the garden* and this hard work was rewarded with 54 new members.

*Total membership in 1970 was 125 including such well known Malahide families as Bono, Cowhie, Gibney, Kinahan, Klinkenbergh, McAdam, Newman, O'Brien, O'Farrell, O'Loughlin and Wright. The membership fee in 1970 was £1/10- (£1.50) for juniors, £2/10- (£2.50) for seniors, £6/10- (£6.50) for family, 10/- (50p) for pavilion members, 10/- (50p) for visitors and 5/- (25p) for visitor beginners.*



# A New Era



**Grove L.T.C. general view**

In 1970 a special rate of 15/- (75p) was decided upon which would entitle new members to full facilities of the Club for their first season. Entrance fee for American Tournaments at this time was 3/- (15p). Subscriptions this year amounted to £104, a substantial increase on the previous year. However a junior tournament on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July recorded a loss of 2/- (10p), there being only 10 players present. In August 1970, Nigel Beamish was given life membership in recognition of his financial support.

By 1971 membership had increased to 160 and limiting of membership was discussed. One year later it stood at 212. A cause for concern in 1971 was the use of offensive language by some members. The committee warned the offenders that their suitability for membership would be reviewed if this did not stop. It was also noted in that year that should a non-resident of Ireland win a perpetual trophy, it must remain in his host's house.

The decade 1970 – 1980 was a very busy one in the Club's history. Improvements in the grounds were made including painting the pavilion green, which is said to have improved its

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## GROVE LTC

appearance, the erection of a Barna shed for housing the mower and other equipment and the erection of a gate from the lane. Frank Donnellan was appointed groundsman. *Many years later in 2004 Frank's younger brother Eddie was appointed groundsman.*

In 1971 Boys and Girls Junior Ladders were introduced and remained popular for a number of years.

The Club went from strength to strength and in April 1972 became affiliated to the ILTA. A waiting list was formed which was put in the care of Arthur Brady. This was taken over in 1973 by Miriam O'Brien, who became Registrar and did an excellent job with the strictest impartiality, until her retirement in 1986. In 1973 also, the Club Constitution was adopted and in 1974 Club Trustees were appointed, namely Bill O'Brien, Tom O'Flaherty and John Miley. *No further changes to the Trustees were necessary for forty years until 2004 following the death of John Miley.* Coaching by club members was held on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Table tennis also provided a very popular sport with official championships being held.

Bernadette O'Rafferty provided professional coaching for the members, subsidised by the ILTA. She was also made an honorary life member in 1972 in recognition of her contribution to the Club and her prominent position in the Dublin tennis scene. Another life membership was granted, this time to Mary O'Herlihy in 1973 in recognition of her services to the Club for many years.



1982

L. to R.: Marie O'Flaherty, Jacqueline Bowan, Billy Burke, Marian Foley, Eimear

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## GROVE LTC

Club coaching has always been a feature of the Club. Originally it was provided by volunteers but since the early 80s the Club has employed a 'Club Coach' on a regular basis. In 1974 Colm O'Flaherty and Peter Moore were the first Grove members to qualify for the Under 11s I.L.T.A. special coaching.

Sub-committees were formed at this time. The Ladies' Committee organised Bring and Buy Sales and similar fund-raising events as well as the At Home party. Also a Tournament Committee was formed to organise the Championship entries and the Draw Monitors were appointed to assist in ensuring that matches were played by the appointed date. This particular activity later became the responsibility of the Ladies' and Men's Captains, the first of whom were appointed in 1981.

Prior to 1970 all committee meetings and Annual General Meetings of the Club appear to have been held in the Grand Hotel. However soon after Bill O'Brien's Chairmanship commenced, the venues for the committee meetings was altered to his home, with occasional meetings in the pavilion during the summer months. AGMs however were still held usually held in the Grand Hotel.

In 1974 Mrs Kitty Hodges was made an honorary Life Member in recognition of her role in promoting Junior Tennis in Malahide.

Bill Burke had joined the Committee in 1970 and by 1975 had undertaken to supervise the maintenance of the grounds, a job which he carried out with great dedication and skill for nearly 20 years. When his son Liam was old enough Bill handed over much of the work to him.





## GROVE LTC

In 1975 the Malahide Sport and Recreation Association entered a team for the All-Ireland Community Games, which emerged as gold medal winners. The team consisting of Grove members chosen by Bernadette and managed by Tom O'Loughlin was as follows: John O'Farrell, Mark Harrold, Conor Geraghty, Pauline Pitcher, Una Miley and Una Kinahan. The M.R.S.A. involvement continued for many years and a number of Grove members played on their teams.

In that year a Junior Tournament was held between the Grove and the Square. A Senior Mixed Doubles match was also held between the two Clubs which the Grove won 4 matches to 2.

In 1977 membership had risen to 435 with a waiting list of over 300. By then the club was running Beginners Tournaments on Friday afternoons, as well as tournaments for juniors on Saturday afternoons, for over 14s and adults on Sundays and for parents on Wednesday evenings. It was decided to employ a supervisor for the summer, Mark Harrold being the first. This practice has continued although nowadays there are two supervisors each year.

Weekly tournaments were run by members on a rota system with the exception of Friday Beginners Tournaments which were started by Betty Harrold and run exclusively by her for many years.



1982

L. to R.: Marian Foley, Alan Clarke, Tony Byrne, Kevin O'Flaherty, Maura Collier.

It is noted in the Minutes that Mrs Kitty Hodges died on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1978. It is clear from the earlier part of this text that the Club is in her everlasting debt.

Also in 1977 Tom O'Loughlin started the County Dublin Junior Championship which was run from the Square. The Grove courts however were used for some of the matches. Two

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## GROVE LTC

perpetual trophies for boys and girls were presented by the Grove for this tournament. As a result of our co-operation with this event, Tom O'Loughlin presented the Club with a plaque which has been used as a Merit Award over the years. It has been presented each year to a member who has provided exceptional services to the Club, not necessarily connected with the playing of tennis.

During the Malahide Festival, the Club ran an Open American Tournament for juniors. This was sponsored annually by Malahide Business Association (later Malahide Chamber of Commerce) and continued for many years. For a number of years some members participated in the annual Malahide Sports and Recreational Association sponsored walk. The Club also entered teams annually in the Festival Quiz and in 1983 won the trophy. The team members were Gerry O'Carroll, Tom and Eleanor O'Flaherty and Donat O'Brien.

During the late 70s and early 80s the Club entered teams in the winter and spring leagues. Home matches were played on local private courts - Moore's, O'Brien's and the Convent – refreshments being provided for visiting teams in members' houses. Those who participated got great enjoyment from these matches.



1982

L. to R.: Shay Scott, Joe McDonnell, Jim Kelly, John Miley.

In the early 80s Men's and Ladies' Captains were elected who are responsible for the smooth running of the championship matches as well as other duties including the organisation of league teams.

Over the years there had been periods of worry regarding the Club's position on the Grove Avenue site. *In 1985 a notice to quit was served on the club by the landlords as they wished to develop the site. Bill O'Brien searched Malahide for a suitable alternative site and identified possible locations along the estuary close to the present Rugby Club and at Broomfield.*

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## GROVE LTC

However *late* in 1985 Michael Howard, a nephew of the original landlord, agreed to sell the site to the Club, *excluding the 6m run-backs to courts 1 and 2, for IRE25,000. The run-backs were retained by the landlords for possible future vehicular access to the old golf course.* By 1986 all details in connection with the purchase of the freehold were completed. A condition included in the contract was that the children and grandchildren of Bertha Howard should be honorary life members.

In October 1986, having successfully negotiated the purchase of the property, Bill O'Brien decided to retire from the chairmanship after 17 years of outstanding service. During this period Bill gave the most conscientious and enthusiastic attention to the task.

On account of his profession of solicitor he acted as our honorary legal advisor and this was particularly important when dealing with the property transactions. For the 17 years of his chairmanship Bill and Miriam provided their dining room for committee meetings together with the most acceptable hospitality. Early in his term of office he installed a fine en-tous-cas tennis court in his garden. Many Club members had happy hours on this court and on more than one occasion the Championship finals were played there in inclement weather. Bill however remained on the committee and when Miriam decided to retire from the Registrar's job, Bill took this over.



1982

L. to R.: Liam Burke, Kevin O'Flaherty, Richard Birchall, Stephen Quinn.

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## GROVE LTC

In 1986 Bill was succeeded as Chairman by Peter Mullock. Peter has carried on the tradition with enthusiasm and has overseen a number of improvements.

At this stage some fund raising functions including garden fetes and plant sales were held. The plant sales were mainly organised by Jim Kelly. These activities were later dropped when the debt arising from the land purchase had been reduced.

Following the purchase of the land, attention was directed towards the necessary improvement of the club facilities. It was agreed the most important matter was water and sanitation in the pavilion; this had been a subject of concern since the Club was formed. Development plans were submitted and the facilities with a kitchen and two toilets were completed in 1988 by J. Geraghty and Sons, Building Contractors of Malahide, whose family had been associated with the Club for many years.

In early 1988 Ray Donnelly was made a Life Member in recognition of his services to the Club.

This history would not be complete without recording that the Grove Lawn Tennis Club has been very largely a family club encouraging Junior Tennis, which has grown more active over the years. Among the children who later became distinguished in the sport are Bernadette O'Rafferty, who played at Junior Wimbledon and became an important coach, Michael Nugent Jr, who did us proud in the Irish Davis Cup Team, David Miley who became, in 1991, Development Administrator with the prestigious International Tennis Federation and Maeve Donnelly who, after playing junior Interprovincial tennis, was in 1994 non-playing captain of the Leinster Interprovincial team and in February 1995, non-playing captain of the Irish Under 14 team which played at Telford.

A tradition in the Grove LTC since its beginnings has been the annual 'At Home' Finals' Days.

Play has always been spread over two days with afternoon tea provided for players and spectators alike. At one time spectators who were not members were charged a 1/- (5p) admission fee.

During the 60s, 70s and 80s, after the last match had been played on the Sunday, there was a rush to get ready for the evening's activities. The evening started with a party for the children (usually fancy dress) followed by the prize giving at 9pm and then a dance for adults and teenagers. The venue for these festivities was originally the Grand Hotel but later moved to the Convent Hall.

Since 1989, following the installation of the kitchen and toilet facilities, presentation of prizes has been made at the pavilion following close of play.

Finally mention must be made of the over-riding influence of the weekly American Tournaments. They brought the members together socially, inspired many friendships and

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## GROVE LTC

contributed to the unique spirit of the Club. In fact they can be said to have kept the spirit of the old fashioned 'Tennis Party' alive. *This spirit was aided by the donation of a barbeque made by Aiden McGuinness and which has been used at major events ever since.*

While the securing of the land and the provision of water and sanitation in the pavilion were milestones in the history of the Club and seem an appropriate point to conclude this history, improvements are continually being made to the facilities.

This narrative has covered nearly 70 years of tennis in Malahide made possible by many wonderful people.



**L to R: Margaret Percival, Helene McCullen, Jo O'Mahony**

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# GROVE LTC



1982

L. to R.: Kevin O'Flaherty, Tom O'Loughlin, Richard Birchall



Robbie Harrold



John Miley and Miriam O'Brien.



Debbie Mullock, Betty Harrold, Suzanne Fleury.



Jim Kelly, Robbie Harrold, Umpire Brian Quinn.



Tony Byrne, Karen Harrold, Grainne Kinahan, Donat O'Brien.





Captain's Day, 1995.



Robbie Harrold, Peter Golding



Annette Johnson, Brendan O'Sullivan, G. V. Wright,  
Margaret McDonald.



Grainne Kinahan, Karen Harrold, Paddy Harrold.



Kieran Leheny, Mark Harrold.



L. to R.-Michael Kinahan, Grainne Kinahan, Mark  
Harrold, Karen Harrold and Tom O'Flaherty at back.

# Towards Fifty Years

'A History of the Grove Lawn Tennis Club', compiled by three Club stalwarts, John Miley, Margaret Percival and Katy Swarbrigg was launched on the Opening Day in 1995 by Club Chairman Peter Mullock. Kieran Sheehan, President of the Leinster Branch of Tennis Ireland was an invited guest and the event was attended by more than 60 adult members. In September that year, Peter Mullock stepped down as Chairman after ten successful years in the role and was succeeded by Carol McAllister.



From L to R, Margaret Percival, John Miley and Katy Swarbrigg, the authors, Peter Mullock Chairman and Kieran Sheehan, President of the Leinster Branch of Tennis Ireland.

Following Peter's resignation he donated the Peter Mullock cup allocated for 16 – 21 Mixed Doubles used for the first time at the 1996 Championships. During that same year the championship draw was computerised using a program written by John Carroll.

Also in 1996 a grant of IR£7500 was obtained from Fingal County Council; part of it was used to replace the fencing along the laneway. The following year the remainder was used to repaint the clubhouse and to install double doors into the kitchen. Also in that year, an annual golf and tennis tournament, the Malaryder Cup was inaugurated and played against MLTCC. This continued for eleven years until 2007 and in later years was limited only to golf, which was played in the autumn at one of the many nearby courses. Unfortunately the record of Grove players over the years was not good: we won three times and drew once.

In the mid1990s a Fancy Dress Day was introduced, where some charming finery worn by lady members has been seen over the years, as well as some interesting male outfits, but the once common practice of using wooden racquets has been discontinued in deference to the bodies of many senior members.





Scenes from two of the Fancy Dress Days around the turn of the millennium.

The Opening Day in 1999 marked our 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday which we celebrated with a party. At this event, a new Club Honours Board was unveiled by Bill O'Brien. The long serving Club Treasurer John Miley, former Chairman and Vice-Chairman Bill and Miriam O'Brien and Groundsmen Bill Burke and his wife Peggy were made Honorary Life Members. A tent was erected near the equipment shed and used to serve wine and a wonderful selection of sandwiches and cakes prepared by our lady members.



Left, Bill O'Brien unveils the Honours Board; Centre and Right, Bill & Peggy Burke and Bill & Miriam O'Brien receiving Life Membership.

At this time summer camps for children were also introduced, which have proved extremely popular over the years and are still being run today.

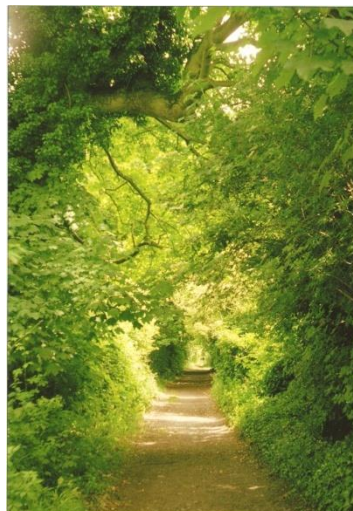
The Grove celebrated the arrival of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in 2001 by installing a dishwasher. The Championship Draw, which had been computerised in 1996 by member John Carroll was improved by the introduction of seeding.

## GROVE LTC

On 11<sup>th</sup> August 2003 our long-time Treasurer and co-author of the 'History', John Miley sadly died aged 80. John had been a member of the Club since the early 1970s and continued playing tennis until his final years. He also played the drums with his band at many a Grove social function. His role as Treasurer was taken over by Colman O'Keeffe.

In 2004, Liam Burke had to resign as Groundsman, bringing to an end a father and son dynasty of about 30 years looking after the Club grounds summer and winter. The Club owes a huge debt of gratitude to the Burke family for all its support in this regard since the very early days of the Grove. Bill Burke sadly died in 2008. This very important role was taken over by Gerald Swarbrigg, with the help of a professional golf grounds-keeper Eddie Donlon.

The following year the Club, along with local residents fought a successful campaign to prevent the laneway being made into a road to service what is now Abbot's Hill. As a result the Club was able to secure the purchase of the six metres of runback at the laneway end that it could not buy in 1986 when the rest of the ground was bought. This hugely important development enabled subsequent works to go ahead without fear that we might have to re-arrange courts had we lost this ground. It was Carol McAllister's last major achievement as Chairman before she stepped down at the end of the 2005 season after ten very successful years.



The old laneway now became a thoroughfare into Abbot's Hill and was laid with tarmac and furnished with lights by the developers, Gem Construction.

Graham Cure became Chairman for the 2006 season and on the Opening Day, two former Chairmen, Carol McAllister and Peter Mullock were made Honorary Life Members. That summer was dry and the courts yellow and not at their best, so the Committee took the far-reaching decision that our courts are our biggest asset and that no expense should be spared to make them as good as we possibly could. During the winter an underground watering system was installed and major grants were sought for future works to the Club. The old asbestos groundsman's shed was environmentally removed and replaced with two

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green metal sheds and the back of the pavilion was fenced off. Keypad entries to the gate and clubhouse were fitted.

Also at this time, two new regular tournaments were started. The Friday evening tennis burger barbeques were introduced every third or fourth week during the season. These have proved extremely popular as a great way to unwind after a stressful week and a relaxing way to start the weekend. The following year, Ladies' Monday morning tournaments were introduced followed by coffee and scones. A texting system was also established to remind members of special events or to advise of cancellations because of weather.

At the 2007 AGM, Bill O'Brien retired from the Committee after 38 years of continuous service to the Club. As mentioned elsewhere, Bill went to the EGM in 1970 and when a motion to wind up the Club was put forward, Bill proposed a counter motion that was carried. Bill became Chairman and for the next 17 years in that role worked tirelessly to rebuild membership and map the ethos that is the Grove today. Without Bill O'Brien what today is a tennis club would be a housing estate. Bill was also a founder member of Malahide Lion's Club so it was fitting that a presentation was made to Bill at the Lion's Tournament the following year.

During the autumn of 2007, courts 1 and 2, which had a slope of over four feet from the top of the courts to the laneway, were levelled. This meant that the depth of the bank was increased and the levels by the laneway and pavilion were raised. The courts and net posts were repositioned and this enabled 20 feet runbacks to be provided. Prior to this, serving was known as 'up or down' the hill. The pavilion structure was found to be sound and so the pavilion was re-clad and a new patio laid. A practice wall was constructed to the side of court 3. A new grass pit was built near the gate for easy emptying. All this was financed from two grants each of about €20,000 from Fingal County Council and the Department of Arts, Sports & Tourism (lottery funds).

In 2008, Carol McAllister and Margaret Percival presented the Club with cups for the Wednesday and Sunday evening players of the year that were won in that year by Paul Murray and Margaret Cure. In the autumn, drainage was installed under court 2 and to the top and side of court 4. The inside of the clubhouse was repainted and the rusty corrugated ceiling treated and painted. A fire door and a new automatic water boiler were installed.

The 2009 year was a momentous one as the Club re-opened on 3<sup>rd</sup> May exactly 50 years to the day after it first opened in 1959.

The sun shone as the Chairman awarded Honorary Life Membership to Margaret Percival, Nuala Burke and Gerald Swarbrigg for their major contributions to the Club over many years.

A flowering cherry tree was planted by Paul Murray and Graham Cure near the gate as a memory of the day.





**Left, Chairman Graham Cure cuts the ribbon to declare the Club open for the 2009 season. Right, Gerald Swarbrigg, Nuala Burke and Margaret Percival receive Honorary Life Membership. Below, Paul Murray and Graham Cure planting the ornamental cherry tree.**



Champagne was served from a marquee erected by the sheds. Later this resulted in some interesting tennis, but the eventual winners were Aileen O'Flynn, Pat Scott, Joe Stanley and William Cure who each won a bottle of champagne. The party continued with sandwiches and a birthday cake in the design of the clubhouse.

It was particularly pleasing to welcome back Tony French as a guest, who can be seen in the *Early Years* chapter with his father Tom doing initial development work in April 1959.

We cannot close this chapter of the Club's history without mention of membership, which had grown steadily to about 640 in the 50<sup>th</sup> year. In addition there was a waiting list of 3-4 years. We should not forget that the original reason for the Grove Lawn Tennis Club was as





Left, Ronan Reynolds, Linda Daly, Graham Cure and Aileen O'Flynn cutting the cake; Right, Tony French 50 years later.

a place where children, then not permitted in MLTCC, could play tennis. About half of the members were children, many of whom became extremely fine players. To single out just two, Karl Murray and Niall Baragwanath both played junior tennis for Leinster from the late nineties to the early noughties and Niall was a runner-up in the all-Ireland U12 Junior Boys' doubles in Fitzwilliam in 2000. We hope that the improvements to the courts under Graham Cure's Chairmanship made possible by owning the land will encourage other young players to develop their games to these high levels.



Photograph taken at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Grove Lawn Tennis Club on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2009.

It is fitting after fifty years to ask why the club has been so successful?

Perhaps it is because successive committees have, over the years, been open to change.

The Grove has a unique and distinct identity of its own. It began as a place for children to enjoy tennis by offering a wide range of fun activities, improvement programmes and intensive coaching courses for all ages.

But the Grove has also become something else unforeseen by our founders.

It is a place many adults enjoy. Some are parents with little or no interest in tennis until their children embraced it. Some are adults who enjoyed the Club as juniors and returned. Some just wish to exercise once or twice a week. But all enjoy the convivial, social atmosphere.

Our calendar and programme has grown over the years to cater for these many varied tastes and has included many fundraising events for charitable causes. The calendar changes subtly from year to year reflecting the age profile and interests of members. So for example adult and child tournaments were very popular during the 90s, were poorly attended and stopped during the noughties but around 2015 have again returned to popularity. Yet the social aspect continues, due entirely to the efforts of members to 'muck in', whether it's the making of sandwiches and cakes, tending the barbeque or the putting up marquees.

The Grove continues to cater for stronger players and many excellent players have entered the Championships and the Fingal Leagues at all levels over the years. And good players also enjoy Captains' and Chairman's Days even though the Club developed a format many years ago that ensures that a lesser player of each gender is always one of the winners.

Our mission is to be a friendly and convivial family grass-court tennis club that provides opportunities for members of all ages and standards during the summer months. The ability of committees over the decades to meet these requirements is indeed the reason for our success.

# Events after 2009

**2010** Courts 3 and 4 were levelled to remove a slope of about 18".

The season was extended by almost a month at either end.

**2011** A new fence was erected between courts 1,2 and 3,4.

Mixed tournament rotas designed by John Carroll replace American tournament rotas that had been in use since the 1980s.

**2012** Paul Murray built a gazebo aided by Fintan Roche, Joe Stanley and Graham Cure.

**2013** Small watering system installed around the clubhouse and middle fence to water hanging baskets.

**2014** New kitchen installed, project managed by Nuala Burke.

Club website designed and built by Nicola O'Connor.

**2015** Electronic membership payments introduced by Nicola and Ken O'Connor.

The Club enters the Fingal League, winning both the Men's and Ladies' sections.

Graham Cure stands down after ten years as Chairman.

**2016** Derek Reid elected as Chairman.