

Earliest Years
of the
Euroa Lawn Tennis Club

1946 - 1962



written by Arthur Frost

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of reliable factual information is the most desirable feature in formulating a chronical of any description. It appears human nature for the reader of today, to accept such data as the truth, unbiased and correct in every detail. The intent of this compilation has been to conform to that objective, but it must be borne in mind, contradictions are encountered along the way. Within reason, all available sources of material have been investigated and carefully considered. Notes from Club minutes and "The Euroa Gazette" were regarded as acceptable. Additional embellishment by way of personal perspective has been included.

Allowances, however must be made in evaluating these sometimes conflicting personal recollections made necessary by the absence of the both "Gazette" copy and club minutes. It is most unfortunate that this complete absence of essential factual information coincides with the formation year of the Euroa L.T.C.

Existing minute books show records only from November 4th, 1948. This highlights an example of insufficient care of our formation narrative. We should learn from this lesson and ensure that appropriate action is enacted without delay. It is because of these missing books that one must read "between the lines", plus the ever-debateable memories of those whom volunteer personal beliefs. Such latter information sometimes can be of limited value, for its accuracy is difficult or even impossible to verify. Furthermore there were secretaries who provided very legible, accurate and complete records, but alas, there were some whose use of the perverse pen was somewhat skimpy, being akin to the proverbial "thumbnail dipped in tar".

The vital minutes containing the factual accounts of the real beginning of the ELTC from 1946 to November, 4th 1949, are lost, probably forever.

The very relevant factor of available time has somewhat encroached upon more detailed, wider research. This dossier already has been over six years in the making. It is to be hoped that this document will be accepted as a reasonably accurate review of the early years of the Club. At the least, it should allow the reader to gain some appreciation of the many aspects prevailing in those times, morally, physically and financially.

Other tennis history is available from the book by C.W. Halsall "History of Sport in Euroa and District".

The cover period of this review terminates on October 25th 1962, simply because that happens to be the last committee minutes recorded

in that book. (page 162). Therefore we are reflecting upon a duration of some sixteen years. Some personalities may have begun to make their presence felt late in that time frame and should appear in later chronicles.

Finally, a word of explanation regarding the Frost Brothers with the accompanying confusion of names. Some secretaries (and many other people) had quite some difficulty in determining which was which, as the minutes clearly demonstrated. In one instance, Sept. 1956, there were three of us, Alan, Arthur and A. From Minutes 1/11/64 - Apologies - A. Frost, Correspondence Rec'd - A. Frost.

EARLY TENNIS

Lawn tennis was actually played in Euroa as far back as 1923 when an earthen court in Railway Street, put down by Mr. Ken Stribling and his brother, was overrun by couch grass. The imaginative brothers quickly realised its possibilities by nurturing the infant invader. Perhaps Mr. Ian Currie became aware of this grass court or may have also envisaged such potential when a court was established at Seven Creeks Estate in front of the homestead in the early 1920's.

The first grass-court tournament appears to have taken place on the present football oval during the Christmas period of 1930. The committee at that time was led by Cr. A.E. Bond. This tournament with the same venue continued until the beginning of the second world war in 1939, when tennis was largely discontinued until after 1945. Xmas tournament tennis was played on 'the Oval' in 1946, using eight courts only. Although reference is made to a Euroa Lawn Tennis Club on page 10 of the "Euroa and District Sport", it concerned only Xmas play and not Saturday competition on grass. Cricket always retained preference for summer sport on "the Oval", but this was seriously challenged. In 1932 there arose intense, heated debate as to whether tennis should take over "the Oval". Thirteen courts were used for the tournaments at that time while twenty could be accommodated.

SEARCH FOR A HOME

A meeting of the EDTA considered a total grass-court competition at the showgrounds, but it appeared too expensive and was deferred. Other sites were investigated with hostile divisions of opinion. One of those sites took in the then open area between Foy and Templeton Streets facing the picturesque Seven Creeks park (with its flooding). Too costly here also.

A further attempt to establish full-time tennis on "the Oval" met with very spirited

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response in 1945. Letters to "The Gazette" flowed back and forth with feeling running high. A public meeting addressed by Mr. J.J. Tehan proposed the formation of permanent grass-courts on "the Oval". Club membership had then passed forty - a "big" club indeed. Mr Malcolm Cameron was bestowed the honour of becoming the reformation president of the ETC in 1945-6 as was Mr. Noel Allen, Secretary.

Cr. Dennis McCormack was president of the EDTA when serious consideration centred upon all district tennis being played on grass. On Jan. 29th 1946 this advertisement appeared in "The Gazette". "I hereby convene a public meeting to be held in the "Civic Hall" supper room on Friday Feb. 1st. to discuss the establishment of public grass courts in Euroa. Cr. D McCormack. Shire President".

On Feb. 5th 1946 "The Gazette" reported about 50 people attended when a recommendation for establishing six permanent with six temporary courts in the area occupied by the three public asphalt courts. These, adjacent to the croquet lawns would encroach upon the Euroa Golf Club's last hole. This recommendation was adopted subject to approval of both sporting clubs.

A committee had previously drawn up plans and specifications for submission. Mr. Tehan (secretary) outlined certain proposals, showing various sites, especially the selection of the croquet site with Mr. A.L. Hemley's (shire engineer) prepared plans. These envisaged six courts running east and west with six temporary courts on the northern (downstream) side. Cost was to be £1,034 (about \$2,000) for fences, preparation, including tree removal and seating but no flood protection. Mr. Hemley thought two to one Government grants may be available. It would be necessary to remove 42 trees.

Mr. Cameron's concern was whether twelve courts may be enough, while Cr. McCormack thought perhaps three more could be added. Cr. T.J. Nolan said Euroa had three recreation grounds - "the Oval", The Friendly Society Ground (said to be a cow paddock) and the Showgrounds (used once a year)- there appears to be no further mention of these in the report.. On a prewar basis it was felt in some circles that as many as 22 courts would be required as well as club courts. It was expected that at least six to eight clubs would play association competition the following season.

DIVISION OF OPINION

Mr. Tehan said his committee worked on the assumption that the association were not participating as they had made no move. Crs. Cameron /Nolan moved that the shire be asked to

approach the Friendly Society with a view to transferring their trusteeship to council so grants could be made possible. This motion was later withdrawn although Mr.Noel Allen gave assurance of EDTA support for the project.

A committee was formed to pursue the matter consisting of the Shire President, Cr. D. McCormack, Shire Secretary/Engineer, Mr. AL Hemley, Messrs JJ Tehan, TJ Nolan, JC Elgin, E. Houston, P. Elvins, Dan McKernan, NJ Allen, D. Maxfield, L. Anderson and J. Ferguson. This group of people (all men) represented a very substantial cross - section of the community.

Notes from the council meeting of Feb. 19th 1946 showed opposition to the possible reduction of golf club area. Councillors did not agree with destroying a timbered park and golf would be hindered on the Friendly Society area where it would mean yearly removal of fences. Held over! On March 26th 1946 council again discussed the proposed grass courts dilemma with the sporting clubs conferring. Cr. AE Maygar was against the F.S. scheme as it would impinge upon golf. Cr. Tehan, being strongly in favour of the croquet site, said it would hardly affect the golf and that if a decision was not reached now, it may be many years before the chance came again. The Friendly Society was considered too far from the town centre. A further meeting was suggested.

"Gazette" April. 16. 1946: If Friendly Society trusteeship passed to council, tennis would occupy 2 1/2 acres (1 hectare). The small corner now privately owned would be bought by citizens and added to the reserve. This 3/4 acre allotment from Garrett Estate was bought for £85-.

May 14th. 1946. The controversy was now really emotional with many letters and petitions being presented. Councillors inspected the croquet site and while they were in favour of grass courts, they did not want interference to golf. On June 18th 1946 council refused the croquet site by a nine to two majority. This decision raised a storm of protest when on June 25th among those expressing disapproval were Cr. Tehan, Mr. Bob McKernan and Mr. Noel Allen.

FINAL DECISION

A breakthrough to the impasse finally surfaced when control of the Friendly Society was transferred to council.

From Council minutes 10th July, 1946: "Crs. Nolan/Stribling - that this council accept the offer of the Trustees of the Friendly Society to act as Committee of Management. Moved Crs. Brook/Nolan: "that application be made for grants for park improvement, the fixing of amounts to be left in the hands of the engineer.

Other reasons for this area being preferred

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was that the land cost the council nothing and it offered greater scope with no flooding worries.

The site concerned was merely a large paddock with several enormous gum trees along the creek side. One wonders how conservationists and then council would have reacted had they been as active as they are today. The ground contained a rough unfenced oval as well as several golf holes which were part of a course which encompassed the creek to its clubhouse on the northern side of the one bowling green at that time. It is interesting to note the various directions taken by this course. At one time it crossed the old highway into the Clay Products land, which itself formed the Euroa Racecourse. Golf was played in the country of Teson Trims and still further west through the now sale yards area, crossing the Shepparton Road still further into the setting sun.

Records indicate three independent bodies were involved in this possible formation of grass courts - one could be said to be an unaligned group of people known as "The Committee for Establishing Grass Courts" the EDTA and the Euroa Tennis Club. All bodies were requested by the shire to co-operate in the new venture.

BEGINNING OF THE COURTS

Mr. Hemley reported to council on July 16th 1946 that initial levelling and planting, without reticulated water or fencing would cost £350 (\$700). This proposal was carried unanimously and a grant application made.

Mr. Hemley further reported he hoped for an immediate start to prepare twelve courts with a possible area for twenty seven.

The ETC on August 6th 1946 accepted the council proposition for the Friendly Society ground. A special meeting of the Euroa Golf Club followed suit, agreeing to the plan submitted by Mr. Hemley. It appears the Euroa Golf Club virtually came to an end about this time, with their members joining the newly constructed "Castle Creek" Club, formerly of Mansfield Road where Newtons Electric Fencing Co. is now situated.

The annual meeting of the ETC on August 20th, 1946 saw over fifty in attendance when Mr. PH Elvins was elected President, Mr. ND Allen, Secretary, and Mr. C. Meagher, Auditor. The committee consisted of Mr. Athol Jones, Harry Morgan, Don Maxfield, Jim Sutherland, Bob (RJ) King, Jack Tehan, Mrs. R. McKernan, Misses Lurline Hemley, Marie Nolan and Kathleen Goldsworthy.

WORK BEGINS

Under Mr. Hemley's supervision, work commenced on the area laid out, with soil samples taken. He met again with an executive on August

27th, saying how fortunate it was to find a rich bank of red soil there, lessening the need for complete top dressing. He organised the importation of some special loam from an area upstream of Burtons bridge.

The Shire was instrumental in the physical operation of laying down the playing surfaces, but it was Mr. Hemley personally, who contributed enormously to their foundation. His intense involvement later led to a life membership and with it the distinct honour of becoming the first life member of the Euroa Lawn Tennis Club.

By the 17th Sept. 1946, the new surfaces were ready for sowing as council could move swiftly in those times. Mr. Ian Currie of Seven Creeks Estate had earlier on a trip to Scotland, brought home with him experienced gardeners to tend his seven acres of magnificent gardens. These gardens plus a superb nine hole grass green golf course, required a full time staff of six. The grounds were regularly opened to the public in order to raise money for our Bush Nursing Hospital. The head gardener himself, in the person of Mr. Tom Stewart, still with the tongue of native Scotland upon him, took charge from the diligent Mr. Hemley. Displaying similar tireless aptitude, Mr. Stewart insured the whole site was carefully hand-levelled, pipes layed and seed to the value of £50 (\$100) sown.

The general committee, meeting one week later, was informed that all seed was sown over the entire ten wide courts and some of the area temporarily fenced. It was expected the courts would be ready for play by Christmas with the intent to hold the first lawn tournament since the days of "the Oval". Imagine the degree of expectation in the club with the vision splendid at last in sight, after so much wrangling over sites, so much doubt the prospect would ever eventuate.

DISASTER STRIKES

Such high expectations were to suffer cruelly however, when a severely disillusioned and shaken committee became aware all was not well, for the new grass failed to reach the hoped-for progress. This was due apparently to very poor water pressure and some disappointing soil failures.

Consider the dire position of the club. The dreaded great depression, followed by the most disastrous war every experienced and the resultant impoverishment of the nation. The remarkable recovery which wars seem in engender, not yet on the horizon. The ravages of war with its accompanying effects upon its all important nation and club builders, coupled with an almost unprocurable supply of any sort of materials, presented the most daunting prospects. Even more

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disturbing than these disheartening obstacles, rose the over-riding and ever present fiscal dilemma, facing a club with a five year non-operational interruption. And now, all of the painstaking back-breaking never-ending voluntary work plus the seemingly small fortune of available finance gone in a few brief days.

The utter hopelessness of such a distressing predicament weighed heavily upon all those associated with the prospect, including the Shire Council, who had initially contributed in no small manner. What could be done to somehow retrieve the flagging spirits and turn around the bogged-down operation?

THE TOUGH GET GOING

But then, the old adage of "when the going gets tough, the tough get going" swung into action. The pioneering spirit rose to the occasion. Pioneers are generally associated with the conquest of new lands, of settlements with law and order. In effect pioneering is a continuing process with an endless range of new frontiers. There will always be new horizons, new goals and new solutions. All that changes is the background and people involved. The pioneers of lawn tennis as we know it today were those whom sought the new horizons, whom overcame the obstacles, settled the land, and brought law and order to tennis.

Mr Cameron returned to the scene, rallying support from new quarters, finding the "unprocurable" materials and encouraging everyone with his infectious never-say-die optimism. With no money available for more seed the option of sprigs of grass was adopted. Again a top man was procured to supervise and provide the expertise in this fresh approach. His name was Mr. Jock Joiner, Head Curator at Kooyong, then the headquarters of lawn tennis in Victoria and venue for the "Davis Cup". This was also the meeting place for Country Week tennis over the years.

Mr. Joiner was ably assisted by Mr. Sam Davis who contributed enormously with meticulous dedication. Sam was subsequently appointed the first paid curator, but apart from this demanding task, he displayed considerable interest in junior tennis to which he contributed the "Davis" cup for a Saturday morning competition. For this extreme participation on two fronts, Mr. Davis became recognised through the club's second life membership.

Because the sprigged grass was not ready on December 6th 1946, a decision was adopted by the tournament committee to stage the annual Christmas event on seven hard-courts, including St. Johns, Methodists and St. Pauls. This constituted the 17th Annual Tournament.

WHERE DID THAT GRASS COME FROM?

As a little aside it is interesting to include a story of the source of some of the couch grass sprigs which were in acute demand because of the huge area involved. One person quite prominent in this intensive search was Mr. Athol Jones who later became club champion and president. This incorrigible character reportedly used one of his school grades to remove couch from the oval, claiming the Tennis Club had contributed to its upkeep in years past. Imagine the consternation and furore from the Cricket Club and especially from its prominent personality.

OFFICIAL OPENING AND FIRST ANNUAL TOURNAMENT

Included here are the actual excerpts from the 1948 Annual Report which covers the first season of play:-

"The new courts were officially opened by Cr. H.B. Baylis, president of the Shire of Euroa, on December 26th. 1947. Previously they had been available for play from December 14th. During the season, the Annual Christmas Tournament was held. Exhibition matches were played on January, 31st. A team from Wangaratta LTC played a return social match, EDTA "A" Grade finals took place on the courts, while on closing day, April 17th, there was a large attendance of visiting players.

For their first season the courts played remarkable well. This was due to the skill and painstaking efforts of our curator, Mr. S. Davis. During the winter, Mr. Davis has worked continuously at the courts, and has closely followed the plan submitted by the curator of Kooyong Courts, Mr. H. Joiner, who visited Euroa in May. It is anticipated that twelve splendid courts will be available for the coming season. On behalf of the members we convey to Mr. Davis our sincere thanks for the work he has done for the club. At a Committee Dinner held at the Seven Creeks Hotel on April 21st, Mr. Davis was presented with framed photographs by the committee, and Mr. Alan Winburn (vice-president), respectively.

In connection with work at the courts, two members of the committee, Messrs. A. Jones and B. Burton, deserve special mention. They gave our curator a great deal of assistance and during his holidays they carried on the maintenance of the courts. They also organised a most successful night working bee.

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IMPROVEMENTS

New fences have been erected at the south and west sides of the courts and suitable trees have been planted. Arrangements have been made to have two trees on the west side lopped. The council has signified its intention of improving the road to the grounds. It was decided to build the Clubhouse on the north side. It was found impossible to begin this work for the coming season. The committee adopted a plan of finance for the erection of the Clubhouse. The finance committee has been endeavouring to raise a loan of £1,500 with interest payable at 4%.

ADMINISTRATION

Committee meetings held throughout the season were well attended by members. A list of attendance (five or more) is appended. The Social Committee led by Mrs. R. McKernan and Miss M. Nolan, joint secretaries again was of great help to the club. Money raised by this committee financed the purchase of an electric mower.

CHRISTMAS TOURNAMENT

The eighteenth Annual Xmas Tournament was held, and was most successful. However, owing to the lack of normal facilities, and inclement weather, there were some difficulties in the organisation of the tournament. Members of the tournament committee will submit reports to the incoming committee and it is suggested that the new committee deal with this matter in the very near future."

FIRST TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE

It is necessary to recognise the membership of the first ELTC tournament committee : Chair, Dan McKernan; Courts captain, Harry Morgan; (Club Chairman); Secretary, Noel Allen; Tournament Manager, Alan Winburn and treasurer, Clem Meagher. It is fair to assume that lawn tennis really began in 1947-48 season. Special mention was accorded members A. Jones, B. Burton, AL Hemley, MC Cameron, H. (Jock) Joiner and S. Davis for their exceptional services toward courts establishment, while T. Stewart was commended for outside development.

PRIMITIVE FACILITIES

Further elaboration is included here to stress description of available facilities, keeping in mind that clubhouse amenities are but a vision. These were the years of 1948 onwards. Social tennis on Sundays meant afternoon teas (until 1955, no beer) when inter-club visiting as

well as local games were held. Myrtleford, Avenel, Yarrawonga, Seymour, Shepparton, Mt. Beauty, Caulfield Recreation, Tatura, Wangaratta, Mansfield, Violet Town, Alexandra, Strathbogie and Brunswick were welcome visitors. These people as well as providing top class tennis, returned as regular participants to our tournaments (and vice versa). Such happenings promoted Euroa in the world of tennis which in turn commanded support from sports goods companies who aggressively sought sponsorship. These companies also supplied top tennis players which further enhanced our tournaments. Reference of this activity is enlarged upon later.

Afternoon teas took place in a wooden trellised shelter beneath the existing silky oak tree adjacent to the original machinery shed which supplied the only electricity to the whole area. That tree was probable twenty to thirty years old then, for it provided a quite large shade covering. The shelter was eagerly sought, being regarded as a very pleasant spot because shade was minimal. The only other trees were those along the roadside. One tap (still there) was the sole water source apart from two on the courts, while hot water came from an electric urn. So nature provided the air-conditioning with a ready conversation starter. It behoves the reader to imagine the days of hot/hot north windy conditions.

The shelter described was the nearest approach to a clubhouse, which position was not yet determined although Mr. Hemley had obviously allowed space between the already erected but separated toilets. These toilets served the Friendly Society Cricket Club, also, council decreeing they remain open. However it always remained the lot of the tennis club to maintain them. First serious moves toward a clubhouse arose in 1948 when a loan of £1,500 @ 4% was suggested, but considered out of reach.

Wooden spectator stands were erected, firstly without sun protection, then Hessian covers followed by longer-lasting canvas (whoopee) such materials still in very short supply. The wooden stands did not last because they were often moved (by eight men) to allow the mowing of long grass. The existing pipe stands proved to be a much sturdier alternative (even Mr. Cameron couldn't obtain pipe in the earlier days!)

Club meetings occurred in various venues such as the hotels, baby health centre, shire hall, the Oval, band hall and members homes, of which some centres were desperately cold. Such occasions brought about a few alarmingly low attendances and too brief meetings. At times some colder periods saw no meetings for as long as five months. The majority of the venues however, had one great and essential attribute- they were free!

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A supplementary water system helped overcome the Water Trust supply shortage (they probably couldn't get pipe either) when a motor loaned by Mr. Alan (Windy) Winburn coupled to a pump at the creek provided the vital resource. At times, even this avenue was in jeopardy when the pumping licence was challenged in times of low flow by farmers downstream. More about this later. Charges for Water Trust delivery for the 1948 year stood at £1.13.8 or \$3.35 (groan). A garden for shrubs including twelve roses donated by "Windy" was established at the west (creek) end of the courts and maintained by Mr. Tom Stewart (and others). A grounds sub-committee comprised W. Douglas, E. Poole, B. Burton, retired curator S. Davis (life member), and Mr. Keith McKinnon, recently appointed greenkeeper (temporary) at £3 per week when required. He was subsequently elevated to a permanent position of an envied £3 summer and £1.10.0 in winter.

CONDITION OF COURTS

Court conditions, even from the very beginning never attained the wonderfully high standards of today and a timely reminder to anyone who complains of indifferent playing surfaces is appropriate here. Set sprays with meagre delivery were the order of the day, resulting in bare, depressed back lines. Winter grasses under higher temperatures soon disappeared, causing unevenness and alarming, perhaps unplayable bounces. Furthermore, the white lines on dirt vanished in the first few games, giving rise to many disputed calls and grudgingly/delightedly replayed points.

UMPIRES AND BALLBOYS

So the day of the umpire came to the fore, either standing at the net post or later sitting on an elevated pipe stand. Imagine if you will, the difficulty of maintaining a constant source of suitable people to officiate in the sun and then to be called upon to play. The necessity of linesmen and roving foot fault umpires became apparent and were even harder to find. An added problem also arose in the procuring, managing and paying of ball boys. One of the best organisers in this department was Fr. Sait with his wondrous ability to handle at all times, a small army of twenty boys @ 10/- a day, (later taken on by Lee Watkins), reliant on a ceaseless supply of free drinks. This item of drinks raised another small but significant visiting player aspect. Melbourne visitors especially, were quite vocal about our flavoured drinks with comments concerning our water. We inferred it didn't make us unwell, but then again unlike them we were not accustomed to MMBW filtered supply.

ATTEMPTS TO IMPROVE COURT CONDITIONS

Many attempts to improve court surfaces brought little success. The new hybrid imported grasses were then unknown and because of the slower response of old couch, poor water supply plus insufficient knowledge and finance, we were frustrated.

Tram lines too were unheard of, so there was no relief for the battered backlines although we did try moving courts back and forth. One further aspect of court preparation included regular topdressing with loam, spread by members own farming equipment and frequent applications of sulphate of ammonia. This fertiliser caused a wondrous response especially to couch, but on the down side if it were left unused, it set like concrete. Several bags of this solidified material stood for some years taking up precious room in our small shed, until the advent of the Harris brothers. Twins Abe and Ralph with their wives Norma and Jean were fine players, being regular visitors to our tournaments. They were the most helpful people in the way of watering and general maintenance. On learning of our solid sulphate, the boys, over a Xmas period, used sledgehammers to reduce the sulphate again to powder, in the sauna conditions of the closed-in tin shed. Courts were rolled with an old heavy shire roller which made for fast true surfaces, but hard on watering. Neil Mintern recalls using their farm horse to pull the roller around from the Oval prior to doing the courts. Before the war leather shoes were fitted to the horse's feet on the Oval.

In 1957 the Apex club provided assistance one year of particularly bare backlines by reblocking with turf, but somewhat unsuccessfully as considerable expertise is demanded in this operation. One may well ponder the relative standards of court surfaces and player quality in comparison with today. It may appear our surfaces of yesteryear should not have attracted top line competitors, but such was not the case, for it was common to see Australian and even world stars in action here. In fact one year we were honoured to have Michael Davies, a member of England's Davis Cup team play in our tournament.

WINNERS OF FIRST TOURNAMENTS

Jimmy Matthews became victorious in the first tournament open singles, in effect he went on to win another three times. Matthews, a tall rangy man, was left-handed with a very wide swinging serve to the backhand. One of our most noted final matches saw him pitted against an opponent of equal calibre in the up and coming Neale Fraser, with a similar service action. It would have been

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impossible to play on next door courts with this remarkable match in progress. In the ladies section Miss Wilma Huf achieved the honour of becoming the first and subsequent women's champion.

The golden years of top quality tennis would have occurred in the first ten years of the Euroa Lawn Club tournaments. To illustrate that point, lets refer to the 1951 Annual Report which states "the 21st annual tournament was the most successful the club has ever held. The standard, which has now almost established itself as the best Xmas tournament in the state, was reflected in the fact we had eight interstate (and many "A" pennant) players contesting. Cliff Halsall with his "History of Sport in Euroa" gives a very detailed account of the great players in those times.

CHAMPIONS INFLUENCE

Such wonderful displays of tennis must have influenced the locals in several ways. Young people wanted to take up the game and were encouraged to do so by way of junior coaching, initiated early on by the sports goods companies. Their intense rivalry, referred to previously, caused them to send out coaches who used both court and film education. For further information on junior tennis refer again to "History of Sport in Euroa" page 20. So this coaching in turn marked a general upswing in standard and brought about a boom in local tennis mainly through the efforts of Bill Stevens with administrative back-up by the Lawn club.

ASPECTS OF SURROUNDINGS

We have learned of the early courts, the players, water supply, inaugural administration, "club amenities" and garden. We now turn to some other early aspects beginning with the approaches to the courts. The "road" was a rough dirt track which on occasions demanded watering to prevent clouds of dust from interfering with play on the closest courts. It was not until some years later that we thankfully were granted the luxury of a sealed road.

The area immediately north of the courts presented a rough, uneven paddock of high, dry grass in summer. It was moved on August 23rd 1949, that the north side be ploughed, graded and sown. Application was made to council to have an area on the north side fenced to control entry. Mr. Tom Broughton acted as tournament gatekeeper for many years at a two guinea (\$4-) remuneration plus bonus at times. Mr. Tom Stewart was thanked for his donation and planting of four trees in 1952. Cypresses were planted on the southern (town) edge probably prior to 1950, this type of windbreak being the most popular because of their tough dense effectiveness. They were

widely grown in many regions of Victoria until a disastrous wind-borne fungus absolutely decimated their ranks in 1962. The then "Forest Commission" warned against further plantings. An attempt to grow Lilly Pillies behind them in case of a complete wipe-out became frustrated when sheep were introduced into the "Friendlys" area. Fortunately the fungus wore itself out, but in the meantime further Cypresses were added to the creek fringe in 1955, necessitating the removal of the Winburn donated Roses. The roses were replanted along the northern fence but proved unsatisfactory in that pedestrian area. More shade trees complemented those of Tom Stewart, some remaining to this day.

THOSE EARLY FENCES

Early court fences were at first of a temporary nature to the best of memory. Poles from courts at "the Oval" were used to prop up camouflage netting. Perhaps the seven feet high cord pig netting used at the Oval may have been used at the new courts for a time. From the 1952 Annual Report comes a proposition to fence the rear of the courts. Special yellow box timber was donated by Mr. M.C. Cameron for use in court fence posts, many of which are still in sound condition to this day, being nearly fifty years old. The wire netting, which at that time was in extremely short supply because of the aftermath of the war, was procured largely through the actions of Mr. Cameron. His persistent aggressive efforts over a prolonged period, coupled with great organisational ability, even though he played little tennis himself, made him an automatic choice for the distinguished position of first president of the newly appointed committee in the newly formed Euroa Lawn Tennis Club and later made a life member in 1960.

THE PORTABLE DANCE FLOOR

It was proposed at the committee meeting 15th Nov. 1949 to purchase a portable dance floor mainly for Xmas tournament entertainment. As no floor was available, the club built their own from Alexandra timbers. The unit consisted of eight sections some six feet by ten feet or twenty by twenty four feet overall. It required six good men to lift each piece but fortunately Frost Bros. supplied the perfect low-loader truck with sides for transportation. For Melbourne people especially, this outdoor dancing proved a novelty and an attraction, more so on hot nights. The usual (perfect) venue presented itself on the grassy tree-lined banks of the clear Faithfulls Creek on the Balmattum property made available by kind permission of Bob and Dot McKernan. These people were staunch club supporters as were the

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musicians, Henry Gallagher (accordion) (who we will learn more about later) and Stuart Saxon. Remember at all times, money was extremely tight, so we looked for everything, if not free, then on the cheap. Considering that fact, it may seem strange but people then were more inclined to offer their services without thought of payment.

The dance floor was normally rented out at £15- (\$30) per time, but there were many instances of nominal charges (\$1-) to small groups in even more desperate positions than ourselves (if such were possible) Included here were the swimming club, Young Farmers, Agricultural and Pastoral Society and the band. It lasted for twelve years before it either wore out, or the workers did, which was a moot point. We trace its lumbering course via the minute books to page 134 with a decision to advertise its sale in "the Gazette" for £60- or offer. There were no takers however until June, 1962 when seven sections were to be sold for £21-. This is the last reference to this unit, though much maligned physically, most agreeable socially and financially.

ACCOMMODATION

Another time consuming labour intensive transportation exercise involved accommodation, here again a no-cost item. In keeping with the times, which were tough in more ways than one, as well as the people; overnight amenities were frugal to say the least. Spartan stretchers, with thin straw palliasses were brought in from various shearing sheds to "the Oval" rooms, themselves very primitive. A shower was available (cold of course) but acceptable on the summer nights, unacceptable though were the mosquitoes. Such accommodation may have been a novelty the first night but of doubtful value from then on. Tournament management required paid hire tents which although pleasant on days of lesser wind caused some paper confusion and made court surveillance very difficult.

HANDICAPPING AND ITS PROBLEMS

The most difficult aspect of early tournaments, unquestionably however, lay in the extremely involved, embarrassing and vexatious handicapping of players. Consider the situation. Many new visitors of unknown ability or of inaccurately informed reputation, could and did, cause pandemonium among competitors and management alike. Tournament committee members would do all in their power to prevent such invidious situations, but it was at most times inevitable, which brings us to pre-tournament preparations.

With entries closed, the committee would begin the onerous task of sorting the twenty possible events

into open, A, B, & C grades in mens, ladies and mixed. For three nights prior to opening day until the early hours, concentration was demanded and by the last hour of the last night officials were beginning to feel the strain near midnight. Into this strained atmosphere with completion in sight, along would come the nonchalant, utterly irrepressible Henry Gallagher. Tom McKendrick with his eye for detail, would instinctively stiffen in his chair, his actions transmitting to the rest of the apprehensive, weary helpers. "Tom, I've got a few late entries here" was the inevitable statement from Henry, the response from Tom was unprintable. Henry, a good player himself, couldn't refuse an entry and knowing city competitors and being aware of their standards, would comment "Tom, you can't play that player in that grade". In a matter of minutes the carefully organised draw would be a shambles (and so would be the workers). Henry would then blithely take his leave leaving pandemonium in his wake.

EARLY OUTSTANDING PLAYERS

Alleras of time and place have their 'characters', leaders, helpers and malcontents, so progress may occur in spurts rather than constantly. This applies equally to the qualities of work and play. We have heard some of the work side of the equation and to balance the books, lets review a few of the player aspects, beginning with Albert Jacoby, a top liner from Royal South Yarra who caused a sensation here with his astonishing top spin. His ability to make the ball dip and bounce (over our back fences), made him a very difficult opponent. Another equally perplexing adversary was Pat O'Kane who with brother 'Curly' were very regular, welcome visitors from Katamatite. Pat was ambidextrous, so it was most disconcerting to suddenly see a difficult backhand placement effortlessly reached and hammered back left handed. Pat partnered another exceptional sports person, outstanding at cricket and golf, as well as tennis. Two essential attributes contributed to the success of Colin McKenzie in that he possessed both a gifted natural talent coupled with a truly remarkable concentration. Colin twice won country week singles before the war when six teams were entered and with Pat won the doubles in 1948. Colin donated a shield to record the winners of our open mens singles tournament champions. The McDonald family donated the ladies shield, while Mr. Ian Westwood provided a trophy for the 'mens district singles'.

Pat O'Kane partnered a further outstanding player, who although of diminutive stature, appeared a pocket hercules on the court. Bert Kearney of Nagambie proved both a very worthy doubles partner for Pat as well as an equally

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worthy adversary in singles. From 1956 on Bert was victorious in open singles, doubles and mixed.

Following Colin McKenzie came one with near similar characteristics and thus also attained a high degree of fulfilment. Twice junior winner of country week in 1951-52, Lindsay Birch won his first club singles at that time and remained unbeaten for the period of this history. There is an interesting little episode attached to this winning streak, for at one committee meeting Lindsays' dad requested a money order in place of the same trophy which must have appeared akin to a line of ducks on the mantelpiece. Lindsay enjoyed an extended, meritorious association in tournament and competition play. In association with Lindsay Birch we find one if not the most enthusiastic personality involved in all aspects of the game. From an early age he became interested in playing, administration and promotion of not only the Euroa Lawn Tennis Club, but also district and regional activities. To quote from the 1953 Annual Report - "congratulations also to Neil Mintern for winning the special trophy which was competed for over the season". This multi-faceted individual possessed enormous drive and determination in pursuance of tennis advancement.

THE DOMINANT ADMINISTRATORS (SECRETARIES)

With the accent beginning to turn toward the administrative angle we can consider some of the leaders in that field allowing we know of the early 'pioneers' who brought about the formation of this club. Reference has earlier been made of "the thumbnail dipped in tar" and of too brief recording in minutes which suggests to us that posterity will perhaps wish otherwise. This failing is no new phenomenon as records beginning 1926 show. But it is interesting to briefly touch upon a wonderful descriptive example of narration which appears from the Annual EDTA Report of 1927. Five large pages of extremely clear flowing hand fully detailing each item with imagination and flair, but unfortunately for two meetings only. One wonders why? Let me briefly quote an extract from the 'golden' pen of this meticulous (assistant) scribe, who appears to have been Miss Gladys McKernan (Mrs. Reuben Mackrell). "The secretary suggested the retaining of the funds in the association and also a capitation fee for all registered players with a view of providing funds to promote grass courts and working up to a big district tournament and thereby raising the standard of district tennis. It was agreed that delegates discuss the matter with their members".

The nearest approach to such reporting does not reappear until the advent of the previously

mentioned Henry Gallagher at the Annual Meeting of this club in 1951. Perhaps somewhat less expansive than Miss McKernan's example, Henry brought into being a superior standard which others sometimes tried to emulate. He presents us with constructive detail, complete and clear. On one rare occasion Henry allowed his personal feelings to over-ride protocol. Extracted from the committee meeting of 2nd November, 1956: "It was pointed out to the committee by the secretary that the only way to revoke any minutes passed at the annual meeting was by calling a special general meeting under conditions laid down in section ten of the constitution. Moved Neil Mintern, seconded by Wally Crocos that a special general meeting be held on November 10th. The motion was accepted and carried with complete disregard to constitutional requirements", end of quote. None the less Henry was not only an efficient, effective secretary, he was equally proficient in his duties as treasurer because of his State Bank managerial background. He was made a life member in March 1958.

There have been two outstanding exponents of valuable, competent and sustained models of archival portrayal. The earlier one began duties on the 19th September 1947 (the beginning of the ELTC) and ending on February 5th 1951. A quote from the 1951 Annual Report states: "Our very best wishes and thanks are extended to Mr. Noel Allen and his wife who have been transferred to Melbourne. It is largely due to his fine efforts and hard work as secretary and treasurer for the past five years that has helped place this fine club on its present sound basis". So Noel became the first secretary of our club, being accorded a life membership at a complimentary social in April, 1951.

The later secretary with an outstanding service record opened his bookkeeping at the 7th April, 1960 Annual Meeting. With his clear informative accounts immediately evident, Wally Crocos, represented the complete picture of administrator, player and curator, carrying out each segment with enthusiasm and attention to detail. Most of his long association with his beloved sport takes place in the next phase of this story and a more detailed elaboration should then be told.

Over these sixteen years, one person remained head and shoulders above all others in administrative value to our club and tennis in general, exerting the epitome of good will, coupled with sound directional ability. His playing days behind him allowed more undivided attention toward the advancement of club and sport. Harry Morgan was imbued with the wondrous attributes of patient understanding, serene temperament with

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compromise yet constructive suggestion. He was a friend, indeed a confidant to all, with a genial, open, constant personality accompanied by the magic flair needed to turn aside wrath and replace it with amenable agreement. Harry was called "Mr. Tennis" for very good reason as you can readily appreciate, but never more so than those times of undisguised rampant hostility associated especially with the trauma of handicapping. A life membership is granted on occasion to one with a clearly defined activity, rather than one combining certain notable facets. Therein lay the reasoning for worthy recognition and resultant life membership awarded to Harry in 1963. We were indeed privileged to know him for seldom does one have such opportunity.

It must always be born in mind that all administrators have played an active, important and vital role at some stage of our memorable historic past. We are reminded of these quiet achievers by recording their names for posterity.

OTHER ESSENTIAL ASPECTS

Let's return to certain aspects of earlier times upon which we briefly touched. Water supply always posed a serious problem in both method of supply as well as quantity and quality. Town reticulation was stretched to its limit with new piping unavailable, but we were able to use the nearby creek which fortunately then curved in beside the road. We could not continue to impose on Alan Winburn's generosity, so his pumping plant was returned to him in April accompanied by our heartfelt thanks. President Dan McKernan reported on the 19th of February 1951 that he discussed the situation with several others, deciding a new system was imperative. This unit purchased from the Euroa District trading Co. for £159-0-9, required a new site as the creek had begun to bypass the original position. Further upstream on a higher bank with a greater depth of summer water proved a superior location, but one which required a new extended pipeline. In keeping with post-war qualities, this motor did not retain the efficiency of its pre-war relations, soon becoming an obstinate starter much to the exasperation of its minders. An electric motor became the preferred option in 1956, resting on an elevated pipe stand above the existing pump. This immediately removed an aggravating, time consuming chore to the ecstasy of curators, but of course demanding the costly extension of power supply. Simplifying the system however, did little to improve its efficiency with regard to sufficient pressure which would allow the walker type sprays to be used. Set sprinklers were the order of the day, demanding regular monitoring, very indifferent coverage could not be helped. In

keeping with other post-war materials' poor quality, this became most evident in the example of water pipe, which when available and most eagerly sought, was not galvanised. Without protective coating it readily rusted, aided by applied fertilisers, soon decreasing in effectiveness, until with the advent of the new wonder material, polythene, it was replaced in October 1959.

THE RELIANCE UPON LABOUR

Regardless of any work aspect, the emphasis rested heavily upon labour intensity and dependency, clearly identified in the four previously mentioned areas: watering, dance floor, accommodation and tournament (handicapping). But there remained a further equally insistent call on manpower, imperative in nature and care in operation. Think for one moment of the time and energy required to mow the courts using a machine with a cutting width of seventeen inches (half a metre). Nor were these machines of ancient vintage entirely trouble free, maintenance a constant priority. Further more, their grass catchers, in times of high growth rates, would need emptying after one length of run.

CHANGE IN NET POSTS

Another time consuming, albeit less occasional duty, concerned the net posts, wooden construction, difficult upkeep, devilish to move, but even more frustrating, inclined to allow the net to sag while in play. Picture the scene: A very intense, emotional, important final in its closing stages, all eyes on the temperamental arch rivals, the critical stroke of the decisive rally may not clear the tape.... then the net noticeably sags and you are the umpire with past doubtful calls still fresh in all minds.

Mentioned for the first time in a motion on the 25th of August 1953 that we write to Benalla and Shepparton re. tubular net posts, then again in May 1956 quote: "That Bruce Burton, Arthur Frost and Bill Anderson be empowered to experiment at their discretion with concrete base net posts on two or three courts." Finally on November 29th 1959, a working bee to install net post foundations on 6th December. These new structures overcame several problems including cross-wires with several giant metal spikes which were quite dangerous, tripping up many a person. Stakes and wires may well be hidden by long unsightly grass which detracted from tidy courts. Similar grass grew along the fences, necessitating a painstaking handheld clippers task. The bottom of some fences simply wore away because of prolonged damp and fertiliser, which let balls through into other courts causing interruption to play. The centre fence base was concreted in 1955.

THE WORKING BEES

The severe demands on labour called for a never-ending succession of working bees, usually fortnightly for general maintenance, but how that was to dramatically change with our next major undertaking which became an astonishing project noted for its rapid, intensive operation. Be reminded of the extremely meagre money situation with our resultant no-pay philosophy. Hear this snippet from page 57 minute book entry January 14 1957: "The secretary then gave an outline of the club's financial position, urging the committee to greater efforts for the remainder of the season in an endeavour to stop the downward slide of the club finances. This was supported by seven other speakers". Yet here we were, about to plunge headlong into the greatest money-spending exercise since the establishment of our courts, without the wonderful support of two-for-one government grant. Were we crazy or something? Desperate was probably was a more appropriate expression to try to explain the reasoning. Other terms such as foolhardy, calamitous and downright stupid may have been uttered as well, in some circles.

VISIONS OF THE CLUBHOUSE

Since the earliest days, visions of a clubhouse constantly shimmered on our horizon, and like a mirage it tantalised its people for ten long years. Little headway on either the financial aspect or even agreement upon its ultimate position as the minute book March 25 1954 clearly demonstrates. This meeting specifically dealt with clubhouse considerations with three different locations proposed thus: 1. Creek side of ladies conveniences. 2. Under one roof (between existing toilets). 3. On town side of courts, while the fourth amendment carried the day - meet on site to determine position. There is no reference to the outcome of this matter in the next committee meeting or any later time until 1957.

SECURITY OF TENURE

Security of tenure was raised on March 16th 1953 by way of interview with Mr. A.L.Hemley, Shire Engineer, then nothing till May 1954. "That a letter be sent to the Council asking what would be the powers of a committee of management and the term for which they would be elected?" A following motion stated "That two members of committee be elected to discuss with the town councillors the text of their letter - these to be President A.Jones and Secretary Geoff Halsall. The final reference from the next committee meeting viz: "That the committee of management be the President, SVP(B.Burton) and

secretary and a councillor whom we shall invite Council to appoint." It appears from this situation that Council/club relationships left much to be desired for there are other instances where multiple letters were addressed to individual councillors in place of secretary to secretary correspondence. The necessity for this approach is underlined in the instance a request to Council through Shire President and Secretary, received correctly prompt approval, for an extra 12 feet of land required for tramlines in March 1960. In reply a letter of thanks was posted immediately. Finances through the Shire appear to have been directed else where because of our seeming unawareness. The final reference Re. "Security of Tenure" in the 1954 Annual Report viz: "The Council granted us permission to form a Committee of Management for this area." • Financial attitudes in those times were governed by the Great Depression's lingering aftermath, causing extreme conservatism with a reluctance to risk expenditure except for absolute needs.

CLUBHOUSE BUILDING COMMITTEE

Be that as it may, at a special meeting on May 8th 1956, it was moved that a building committee be formed, its duties: 1. To draw up a plan, 2. Investigate possibilities of raising finances. Sept. 5th 1957 included a motion moved by Henry Gallagher, seconded by Bruce Burton that the committee be empowered to borrow £1,000- from the National Bank. Think on that for a moment. Why did Henry, from the State Bank move that another banking group be the source of a big loan? Understand that banks were different then and the State Bank was a savings institution. But another reason lay in the fact that Mr. Pat Till, National Bank manager acted as honorary auditor from our beginning to 14th January 1960, fourteen years later. The Till family were strong supporters in other ways too, with Mrs. Till and Mary being committee members. We will never know the real value of Pat regarding that loan in such times of hardship let alone the behind-the-scenes monitoring.

A building committee consisting of Arthur Frost, (club chair) Neil Mintern (secretary) Ray Carboon, Bruce Burton, Wally Crocos and Harry Morgan were appointed on Sept. 19th 1957. With a building account of only £101.4.5 from 1950, work began in earnest immediately. Driven by the dynamic Bruce Burton with his precept and example, with no such thing as employing paid trades people, this project was a do-it-yourself operation apart from the essential services. The shire-built existing toilet/dressing facilities constructed of cement brick meant similar materials being required. Press gangs consisting of anyone

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we could threaten or cajole, faced the mountainous task of hand-making thousands of heavy cement bricks, gloves being essential. This virtual non-stop activity went on week after week with an ever mutinous crew suffering continuous harassment. The assignment soon turned into a monotonous back-breaking, wearisome exercise even causing the standard of any necessary tennis to deteriorate.

MUCH NEEDED HELP

Then along came a shining star who with professional ability coupled to a wonderful, infectious sense of humour lifted the flagging spirits in the nick of time. This knight in shining armour, Mr. Jack McGough, policeman as of then, but builder by trade, also brought to Euroa a fine tennis family. An energy equalling that of Bruce resulted in the rapid erection of the clubhouse frame with materials scrounged from where-ever. The beautiful tulip oak flooring came from Tasmania, bending many nails and agonising fingers until the introduction of drill holes, every nail punched below the surface. Bricklaying followed the framing, then at last a roof over our heads with virtual completion in about three months.

Perhaps symbolically, the last two committee meetings were conducted in Mr. Till's residence, followed by the first in the sheer bliss of that distant mirage, on Jan. 7th 1958, at which Mary Till attended. Others to attend that memorable occasion were: Arthur Frost (chair) Neil Mintern (secretary) Ken Gall, Jean Hahnel, Bruce Burton, Harry Morgan, Tom McKendrick, Lindsay Neelands and Dennis Kiellerup. It was Mary Till who moved that the account for £1,054 be passed for payment. The loan was repaid by 1962.

MONEY RAISING

Something less conspicuous was taking place during the clubhouse undertaking, for while we were building a clubhouse, a rebuilding of our club also took place. It is not unusual for a commitment of this kind to create a common bond and thus resurrect jaded morale.

Building finance arrived from many diverse quarters including street stalls, social functions, social tennis days, exhibitions, raffles, dance floor hire and tournaments etc. One special event of note became the talking point of society when a huge gathering enjoyed a special outdoor entertainment. Rugged up against the cold night air of May 1957, a festival atmosphere warmed the hearts (and pockets) of the multitude on Mr. Dan McKernan's Balmattum property. This once only carnival did wonders for our Lawn Tennis Club. With the advent of the clubhouse such outdoor

occasions became memories of the past, no more the work involved, the uncertainty of weather, but alas gone too was the charm of that entertainment with its own special significance. One is reminded of much earlier times before even the public hall when a dance meant the creek bridge, the lantern and the fiddle. They would have gained a greater measure of enjoyment for it came but rarely.

Social events held further meaning apart from raising much needed money for our club, indeed as is always the case, others are in more dire straits. Special events took place at regular intervals. For example Sunday tennis afternoons turned into fundraisers for "Food For Britain". The Blind Association constantly called on us and in return supplied trophies. Red Cross too were assisted from afternoon proceeds when 'clock putting' and skittles varied tennis competitions. In 1955 a raffle for one dozen beer cost sixpence (five cents) per ticket, in fact until that year beer was not procurable from the club. Donated fowls were also raffled at sixpence before the days of the deep freeze and a pair of live ducks from the same donor (Mr. F. Dowell), even a load of wood.

SOCIAL

Social evenings, sometimes in association with Rotary, Trojans Club, EDTA and the RSL, took the form of a ball or cabaret conducted in "the Civic" or RSL halls. Wind-up dinners were an annual event at the N.E. Hotel or "Civic" hall prior to the advent of our clubhouse. A social committee ran these functions, at one time in Oct. 1950 with no less than sixteen members. Probable the most noted leader in this sphere of activity was Alan Frost who supervised the portable dance floor outings as well as the indoor festivities. Boxing night dances appeared to be the most popular event, run annually in the Railways Street RSL Hall.

WONDERFUL EXHIBITIONS

Tennis exhibitions were eagerly awaited and well attended. The old wooden spectator stands were manhandled around the best court where the top Australian and world players delighted all followers and participants of the game. In those days Australia led the world in tennis prowess, so it became the highest honour to experience the occasions when such famous performers included: Neale Fraser, Ken Rosewall, Mal Anderson, Roy Emmerson, George Worthington, Ken McGregor and Mervyn Rose. All of these stars held world standard championships during their illustrious careers. It is interesting to remember an encounter in 1955 on the former now disused Methodist courts in Cree Street, where the newly created professionals on

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world tennis, Jack Kramer (USA) and Dinny Pails (Aust.) showed their wares, then partnered Neil Mintern and Bruce Burton in doubles.

FINANCE

The bread and butter financial returns always came from subscriptions which for many early years remained unchanged for fear of losing the desperately sought-after members. A notice of amendment served to determine the outcome of obviously very serious debated discussion at the first recorded annual meeting in 1949 to set the subscriptions at \$2.12.6, juniors 10/6-. It took five years to increase these figures to £4.15.0 where they stayed unchanged till 1962 (the end of this memorandum). Admission to tournaments 1/3 daily, on the last day only those playing were exempt while 3/- was the accustomed green fee. In fact for these final seven years the motion at each annual meeting repeated that fees remain the same. It appears logical to suggest wages and values did likewise.

To provide some indication of total annual amounts raised through the various income earners, the 1954 balance sheet reveals joining fees @ 10/- = £4.10.0, green fees £6/18/6, donations £20.4.6, hire of dance floor £10.12.0, but no admissions shown. Picture nights 1951-52 returned £39.6.3, Red Cross £5.2.6, Blind Institute £6.0.2, special efforts (exhibition) £25-, Xmas tournament rain insurance in 1954 cost £6.15.0. We never collected from such insurance.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership numbers did not show continued hoped for increases from the first recorded annual report of 1948, showing seventy five ordinary (and one junior) to 1951: eighty ordinary and twenty eight juniors - an increase of only five and twenty seven respectively. Indeed 1954 discloses and alarming downward progression to forty six and thirteen, a total of fifty nine. From here on information ceases except to say in 1956 there had occurred a big turnaround to reach one hundred.

THE CLUBHOUSE AND ROTARY

The December 1957 committee meeting minutes tell of agreements to be drawn up regarding club house hiring arrangements and insurance cover note of £2000, while a fee of £3-3-0 was charged to the first patron, believe it or not, Mary Till, on January 10th 1958. During this period an arrangement was approved allowing the Rotary Club use of the building for their weekly dinner meetings at 30/- till 8 pm. This understanding lasted for a further sixteen years, proving a mutually satisfactory episode in more

ways than one. Apart from income, regular use helped advertise clubhouse suitability, while much needed furnishings and fittings were welcome additions. A large gas stove with cylinders was installed in 1962 with a shared payment basis. Following the 1960 Rotary purchase of 17 chairs in consideration of non-increase in fees, we agreed to purchase 17. Combined Rotary and Tennis Club cabarets were held from 1957-1962.

Table tennis was played in various venues prior to 1953 when it was moved the tables be disposed of, but whether this occurred is not recorded. Nor is it recorded when it was played in the clubhouse (which did happen).

COURT PLAY

We return to play on the courts beginning with Ladies Day mid-week first mentioned in January 1949 when an advertisement was placed in "Gazette" asking "who are interested to meet at courts". No mention of subscription at that time, but in 1960 moved it be 30/-, further "that they draw for partners each week or to have a different court captain each week".

JUNIOR COACHING AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS

Junior coaching began with the club's establishment when professional coaches were supplied by sporting goods companies jealously anxious to retain ball adoptions. From the 1948 annual report we read: "A coaching class for juniors was organised by Mr. Ian Trethowan of Spaldings. He was assisted by Messrs. L. Smith and T. Pye and good results were obtained. A plan for systematic coaching of junior players will be submitted to the new committee". The 1951 Annual Report contains similar remarks, while the following year we read, "many juniors are taking advantage of the excellent coaching service offered monthly by two Melbourne Professionals". It appears that this type of coaching ceased about 1962 with a decision not to have Rex Hartwig (£10), its place being taken by local and regional activity. In January 1956: Motion that Peter Gall and Dorothy Beattie be selected for regional coaching class with Nola Hahnel and Graeme Watkins emergencies. It is believed that this 5 day coaching continued on.

Local coaches of juniors at the Lawn first noted in September 1959 minutes "That proposed junior coaching class age limit start at 10 years and that fee be 10/6. Also a further 10/6 be paid if membership of lawn courts required. Duration of class 8 weeks." Then a minute on 11th February 1960: "That W. Stevens be made an honorary member for the 1960-61 season in appreciation of job of junior coach during 1959-60.

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Bill continued this activity beyond this memoranda. During this period assistance was given by members as illustrated by a minute from 14th Sept. 1962: "W. Stevens and A. Frost to draw up a roster of helpers for these Saturday morning classes". The value of these coaching classes should not be underestimated, for it has provided probably the most dynamic impetus to the sport in Euroa over the whole period since our clubs inception. These classes did much more than increase the numbers of juniors to tennis, they brought in mums and dads, (some of whom had retired) to play. Equally important, the essential area of administration was greatly reinforced and improved, perhaps aided by non-playing relatives.

The History of Sport in Euroa states: There were two influencing factors which brought local tennis into a dominant sporting position. Firstly, the Lawn Club gave its full support to the Association with an ever increasing number of teams. The second factor however, was the most important as it not only boosted the Lawn Club, but promoted an enormous influx of fresh young people into the many existing Association teams. More dramatically, it recreated long abandoned clubs and even created new ones. Not only did these young enthusiasts play tennis, they moved into sagging administrative positions and pushed this era of the sport to its zenith. In the years between 1956 and 1969 the number of teams exploded from 24 to 45 and from two grades to five.

THE BIG UPSURGE

The reason for this phenomenal upsurge was the coaching and incentive given to a tremendous number of youngsters. This had a further snowballing effect when these children enthused Mums and Dads who also returned to play and assist in other ways.

The main person responsible for this vital tennis promotion was Mr. Bill Stevens, who actually began on his own initiative as far back as 1948 on the old Methodist courts area (now owned by Mr. R. Brown, Cree St.) This came to a halt some three years later because of lack of support.

Sometime in the mid 1950's the coaching was resumed by Mr. Stevens, this time with strong support from members at the Lawn courts, where numbers of juniors increased to such an extent that nearly 100 attended weekly. Mr. Steven's sound coaching technique set many a junior on the way to very high standards, even to become the best in the country. He coached hundreds of boys and girls in his time and with Lawn Club help was to the forefront in causing the biggest boom ever in local tennis. It must be remembered that junior coaching had been carried

out in previous years, but not with nearly the same intensity.

The Euroa Lawn Club rose to a position from where it once entered two teams in the EDTA to ten. This Association on a population basis would rank numerically among the strongest in Victoria. The club still maintains its coaching classes for it recognised the importance of a constant supply of junior players. (End of extract from History of Sport in Euroa.)

JUNIOR COMPETITION

Junior competition naturally associates with junior coaching. To cater for this automatic progression, the Lawn Club acted as the catalyst to fulfil this requirement by instigating their own local junior tournaments and encouraging these young people to go further afield.

We must return to Feb. 17th, 1949 for the first recorded minute which reads: "That tournament committee meet and discuss arrangements for open district junior tournaments". In Sept. of that year a decision: "that we run a junior competition for 'Davis' Cup. This to consist of Lawn, St. Pauls, Methodists, St. Johns and Strathbogie. Also noted that one court, properly controlled be available for junior members for weekend after opening day (Sat. Oct. 15th), followed by: "that coaching classes be conducted every Sat. morning on the courts 9-11 am".

Since the value of junior members has always been realised a tournament to introduce young players to tennis on the lawn was held. This tournament proved entirely successful and was noteworthy for the marked high standard of tennis throughout. Apart from the trophy prizes donated by Mr. Ian Davidson, the club has offered the successful competitors free membership of the club for the ensuing year. From the 1954 annual report: "The Club has always endeavoured to foster junior tennis and a coaching class was conducted during the season. Trophies were provided for tennis competitions conducted at St. Johns school and the Euroa H.E.S.A. tournament was held on the courts proving successful. The young players being enthusiastic and providing a standard of play worthy of seniors".

The main person then in charge of running junior competition was Mr. Ted Poole, a long time member of committee and one time vice president. Mr Ian Davidson donated a cup at this time, but like others of its kind, its whereabouts are unknown.

School tennis sashes are mentioned on 9th Dec. 1956. The duration of schools competition appears short, but local and regional activity goes on beyond this history. The standard was very high and remained so. Regional junior tournaments

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drew strong support from our club after the mid 1950's when the reward of top coaching became most evident with our young players being among the best.

NORTH-EASTERN DISTRICT TENNIS ASSOCIATION.

From the Annual Report of 1952/53 the following is an extract:

"This season saw the introduction of the club into the powerful N.E. District Tennis Association Sunday competition, which is reputed to be one of the strongest in the State outside of the metropolitan area. This Association has for the past three years held the Country Week "A" grade team championship, "B" grade team championship (of which one of our club men was a member), the "A" Grade doubles championship, and the "A" singles championship, and the "A" singles championship twice. From these facts it may be seen, that our men's team, with Bert Donlan at the helm, performed most creditably to finish in third position on the ladder in their first year. Yarrowonga won the final, with Benalla runners-up. Although the ladies' team was not so fortunate, they acquitted themselves well, and had many interesting and close battles. Our entry into this competition has proved a great benefit to our club in gaining powerful competitive tennis and should serve as an inspiration for the younger members in their endeavour to improve their tennis". So began a memorable relationship of high quality competition and friendship and in doing so, promoted our club extensively. A change in players curtailed these desirable activities with long established fraternities, the sphere of involvement later moving toward Melbourne. The EDTA comprised at one time or another: Albury, Beechworth, Mt. Beauty, Myrtleford, Corowa, Yarrowonga, Wangaratta, Whorouly, Benalla and Euroa. (All grass courts). As early as 1949, Feb. 17th Minutes state: "courts captains arrange the play, social committee arrange afternoon tea with a levy of 1/- for single gents and ladies a basket" for a Wangaratta social visit.

REGION 9

The new Region 9 now in existence included Kilmore, Broadford, Seymour, Yea, Mansfield, Alexandra, Benalla and Euroa with only the latter three having grass. Sunday regional competition occurred and a Saturday "Seymour and District Association" was played then and beyond this history. It appears that here too, the first Region 9 minute book has been misplaced but it is known the first meeting took place in our "Civic Hall" around 1953. Mr. Harry Morgan to the fore again as President with Henry Gallagher

as secretary and Mr. R.N. Vroland, LTAV President in attendance. It can be fairly said Euroa assumed the central role of activity in an area covering Benalla (who wanted as we did to remain in the NEDTA) to Kilmore to Mansfield. Because of this situation, Euroa regularly became the annual focus for Region 9 championships. A note from minutes of April 10th, 1958 tells us "on Sunday the final of the regional competition was played between Broadford and Euroa at Euroa with Broadford being winners". Euroa did later win this event.

FIRST COMPETITION PLAY

Competitor play on the new lawn courts consisted of social tennis apart from one EDTA team, which was withdrawn after the 1949/50 season, when the minutes of Sept. 11th 1950 state " that no team be entered in the EDTA and that competition be arranged for members". As a matter of interest the recommencement of the EDTA after World War 2 began on Oct. 19th, 1946. The annual meeting comprised delegates from nine clubs including Mr. Noel Allen representing "grass courts", remembering such courts were not available until the end of 1947, two more seasons away. Interesting too to read the Euroa Tennis Club or "Public" as it was then known, although being a foundation (1926) affiliate, after one year, withdrew from such competition, not returning until 1949. It may be assumed "Public" meant just that, inferring sufficient numbers could not be accommodated if district matches took place, or perhaps too few social members for club competition if two teams were involved elsewhere. This situation portrays the thinking which dominated discussion in regard to the desirability of full-time "Oval" use or a bigger number of public courts. So the precedent had been set in earliest times making it more understandable why the Lawn club again with drew from EDTA in 1950.

THE DILEMMA OF EDTA INVOLVEMENT

In the latter instance however, there arose a big variable in the form of a greatly increased number of courts, which meant sufficient courts became available for social tennis. It has been stated in the "Euroa Sport" history, that such isolationist play was of doubtful value overall. It may have had a stagnation effect upon both participants and club, while retarding also the expansion of the EDTA.

Withdrawing from the EDTA did nothing to increase club membership as the 1952 annual report tells us the number came down one to 110 followed by further decline for the next two years.

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Bear in mind however, the club was trying desperately to retain all its members, concerned that by removing teams to outside competition would seriously weaken its entire structure. Indeed it is fair to say the early years or re-entry witnessed a continuing decline but on an accentuated scale, until a very grave crisis point occurred. Agonising over which path to follow at the lead up to 1957 division of opinion as to whether to withdraw once more resolved in favour of withdrawal. Lawn "A" and "B" premierships of the previous years carried insufficient weight when an amendment lost the night on Sept. 12th 1957. Strangely enough it was a later stalwart of EDTA (and lawn) who moved no teams be entered and that was none other than Wally Crocos. No one had the club more at heart than Wally, which serves to underline the uncertainty of those troubled times. The duration of this last isolation lasted for one year only, when the full implications of the greatest crisis since inception, stared the club in the face.

THE NEXT PIONEERS

We were desperately in need of pioneers to find new horizons in order to survive. Those pioneers did indeed discover their El Dorado in the promised land of juniors (new settlers) and at the same time relinquishing their outcast mantle to rejoin and replenish their mother tribe the EDTA. This pioneering discovered new resources of untapped rejuvenation in bridging the gap which had stealthily deepened between the two organisations. This did not occur instantly but rather cautiously with one team in 1954, then a second in 1955 when Lawn won its first premiership. A further six seasons had passed before a third (junior) team appeared, but not because of reluctance but of restrictive availability of players.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TOURNAMENTS

To return to the bread and butter aspects of the early days we must look more closely at the evolution of the all-important annual tournaments. As a little aside here, a minute on March 10/49 tells financial concern in these terms: "That all defaulters (for non payment of dues) after being formally notified, be reported to the LTAV." There appears to be no reason to question the rationale of retaining Xmas as the preferred time when the club began after World War 2. It remained so until Dec. 12th 1961 when a general business minute reads "this meeting was called mainly to discuss the lack of entries for the Xmas tournament and after a great deal of discussion it was moved that a decision whether to cancel some events be left to a later date". The following meeting Jan. 11th 1962

reveals "a long discussion took place re the Xmas Tournament and some possible hints were put forward such as: more help, possible change of date". It was decided to continue however for 1962. One may well wonder why this hitherto very successful Xmas event should decline to a point where its continuation was at best doubtful. The lives of people change because of alteration to lifestyles and in sporting clubs generally we witness ebb and flow. These clubs must adapt to such variations or indeed reversals of long-standing practices and principals. In our instance two things occurred and at nearly the same time. One involved the shift of family relationships toward an emphasis of being home to enjoy togetherness in the festive season. This applied to our workers as well as players. This coming together in times immemorial meant a renewing of friendships, of news and exchanging of gifts. Perhaps war may have interfered with this age-old tradition, but for whatever reason there was a deterioration and now it was being addressed. The other aspect lay within the people themselves. Those early Xmas competitors looked forward eagerly with similar aspirations of renewing friendships and news of a tennis fraternity.

TIME FOR CHANGE

Change had now arrived causing the newer enthusiasts to look elsewhere. Although a Labour Day Tournament was held in 1954, perhaps the writing was on the wall from the emergence of the second tournament at Labour Day or maybe these pioneers were seeking merely added financial reward to help alleviate the giant clubhouse loan. For it arose in Jan. 1959 when Harry Morgan moved with support from Wally Crocos, that a Labour Day Tournament be held. The March date presented some varying aspects. Weather wise it was far more agreeable, but both Violet Town and Benalla ran tournaments then. Such events required sanction from the region. Fortunately Violet Town relinquished their date giving up a most friendly affair in very pleasant surroundings. Benalla's main tournament on the other hand always occurred over New Year.

One of H.G. Gallagher's typical minutes of Sept. 5th 1957 in the band hall reads, "a deputation from Benalla LTC (Mr. L. Farrell, Pres., Mr. C. Boyd, Sen. Vice Pres., Mr. C. Woolly and Mr. J Dolphin) was received and the matter of dates for forthcoming tournaments was discussed at length. Euroa decided not to apply for Labour Day in 1958 in favour of Benalla LTC on the understanding that Benalla would not apply for this tournament in opposition to Euroa the following year'.

So the scene was set for the introduction of

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a second main income earner but requiring a further sanction in the form of an agreement from the EDTA that no association tennis be played over that weekend. Somewhat reluctantly this transpired. The treasurer reported a profit of £97-7-11 at the following meeting.

PRESSURE ON THE COURTS

It is appropriate to comment at this stage upon the amount of tennis taking place over a season in the late '50's. Apart from EDTA, Seymour district and regional regular competitions, an "American" tournament was first off on Oct. 19th, followed by an open mixed on Dec. 7th, then the Xmas marathon (which would run for five days), Labour Day in March, Juniors Tournament, April 19th and consideration of an exhibition. Think of our poor back lines and curator, W. Crocos. How he must have welcomed the introduction of "tramlines", a new system which allowed play between courts. Shire approval for extra land was received in 1960.

Social competition involved both Saturday and Sunday. Court captains (there were ten in 1950 which probably was the norm.) managed a court each, being responsible for ensuring minimum lost time and recording results. Apart from day winners, there were season aggregate points champions. On Sundays, names were entered on a blackboard, organised by school teacher Athol Jones who required no microphone (a what?). The sabbath Sunday morning meant no play until special Shire council permission in 1957 was granted. A minute of Jan 14th reads "a letter to council requesting permission to have optional play Sunday morning Mar. 10th in case large entries force us to use same".

PERFORMANCE GRADING

The mid 1950's introduced a novel method of performance-grading allowing lower order players an opportunity to become a member of region/district teams. A Sept. 26th 1961 minute proclaims: "Ladder. (1) J. Ahern (2) R Anderson, that a ladder of players be drawn up by the selectors of the teams after the 2nd match, entitling anyone to challenge either of the three players above them, matches to be played within eight days and consist of eight game sets. This ladder to be a guide to selectors. No replay within fourteen days."

There occurred an interesting side-light to the 1953 annual (Xmas) tournament when no less than five bushfires interrupted play as locals were desperately needed in response to calls from their brigades. Such activity astonished our Melbourne visitors.

CONCLUSION

We have reached the termination date of October 25th 1962, hopefully achieving the prescribed objective of informing the reader regarding most aspects which would be of general interest. This includes some perhaps more mundane issues while telling of the factual times, places, people and events. Care has been a priority, reinforced through proof-reading by people whom personally were involved over the entire period. This method helps overcome the possibility of incorrect conclusion, of important missing aspects, or similar problems associated with a single interpreter, compiler or writer.

It is desirable for the next section of the club's history to be concluded without undue delay, for such history, all too often, falls to someone who comes after those times.

The Euroa Lawn Tennis Club should be proud of its past, not take for granted its position of today, but rather appreciate the achievements of the pioneers. Such advancements were never easily won, being all the more admirable because of the adversity of times long gone. Perhaps its future progress may require similar tenacity of purpose coupled with forward thinking in order to reach distant goals. Certainly the old days of grants appear a thing of the past with user-pays the new catch cry.

Let us hope there always will be tennis because of its value apart from accepted benefits, but more importantly, its little recognised building of character. Long may tennis reign. And may Euroa Lawn Tennis Club maintain its leading role in the affairs of local and district tennis.