

Steve Luck



**Above:** Perranporth Tennis Club c1898. The small original pavilion lies in the foreground and in the background are derelict smelting works. Note that there are a couple of ladies dressed in black outfits.

I was a young teenager when my parents moved to Perranporth. Immediately I joined the local lawn tennis club which I was already familiar with as the Junior County Grass Court Championships were held there in mid-summer.

At that time the club was populated mainly by older players with tennis restricted to when the weather was fine as seven of the eight courts were grass. In the mid to late 70's I attended College in Exeter, and as a result only able to play during the holidays. In this period, I won the Men's Singles trophy twice and was surprised that the large trophy was solid silver! I moved to Essex in 1978 where I developed my coaching career returning to live once again in Perranporth in 2010.

**Left:** Doubles matches (possibly showing the club championships) in the early 1900s. Note the fact that there are only four courts and that there is the provision of a changing tent in the far right hand court.

### Club History

Here are some notes extracted from committee meeting minutes which describe the path of time from the inception to new millennium.

#### 1896

Mrs. Turner of St George's, the wife of the manager of Nobles Explosive Works, proposed the forming of a tennis club to "foster a social feeling among the residents who might otherwise have few opportunities of meeting together". Mr. T. H. Pill of Droskyn consented to give his field, known as the "Lawn" for the first year free of cost provided that a suitable number could be found to join the club.

The first meeting was held in the Odd Fellows Hall on 11th. May 1896 at 7 o'clock and about two dozen persons assembled at the appointed time. The tennis courts were opened on Saturday 23rd. May.

**Below:** A view of the courts from Bolenna Court Hotel





**Above:** Tea and tennis – the perfect combination! Club members enjoying themselves during the 1940s.

**1897**

Mr Pill again agreed to the club having the “*Lawn*” this year at the rent of one penny. Conditions imposed by Mr Pill included “*the club to arrange to protect their property when Mr Pill’s cattle are turned into the field one day each week*”.

**1909**

The old pavilion having been blown down, it was decided to build a new one, 20ft.x7ft. with rustic boarding at the ends.

**1911**

It was recorded the “*dealing with rabbits was left to the committee*”. It was also decided to purchase a rat proof canvas tent for use as a Ladies changing room.

**1913**

The club was affiliated to the Lawn Tennis Association.

**1914**

The pavilion was completed and still stands today.

**1915 – WW1**

A meeting was recorded as “*somewhere in Perranporth (beware the censor)*”

**1917**

It was agreed to allow the Munitions workers to play on the courts on condition “*that the ground is put into satisfactory order for play (at least 4 courts to be prepared) and maintained in such order by them*”.

**Below:** Centre of shot is Winston Graham (1908–2003) – who became Chairman of Perranporth L.T.C. In 1951 Graham (famous for his 12 *Poldark* novels), pictured on court 7 next to Miss Polgreen, lived in Perranporth for 34 years before moving to Sussex. The name *Polgreen* was originally used in the 12 novels, before it was later changed to *Poldark*



**1923**

First hard court was laid.

**1930’s**

The club prospered holding tournaments and teas, dances and socials and made contributions towards the Promenade extension scheme and the Royal Cornwall Infirmary extension fund.

It was agreed that “*shorts or other reasonable innovations in attire, particularly for ladies, could not be reasonably objected to*”.

**1940**

It was agreed to offer members of Her Majesties Forces Club hospitality at reduced rates.

**1941**

Oxford House School requested the use of the courts on 2 days a week. Pupils from the school had been evacuated from London and were housed in Perran Bay. **Note** – *Perran Bay became a residential home and continues as such today.*

**1951**

The author Mr Winston Graham was voted to the Chair. The courts were purchased by the Club. **Note** – *Pictured with Miss Polgreen, Winston spent his days writing from the cliff tops and playing tennis. The name ‘Polgreen’ was originally used in the 12 novels, it was later changed to ‘Poldark’.*

**1960’s**

Concerns were voiced over the state of the courts and the dwindling numbers of members & in 1961 it is recorded that discussions took place regarding handing the courts over to the council. Members felt they shouldn’t think of giving up such an asset. In 1965 the courts were handed over to the Parish Council. Club members Sonia Harvey and Paula Nancarrow became junior doubles tennis champions of Cornwall in the tournament held at Perranporth.



**Above:** A pavilion upgrade.

**1970’s**

Membership increased and regular club tournaments were held.

**1972**

The hardcourt was resurfaced.

**1980’s**

The club entered teams in both the men’s and lady’s county leagues.

**1990**

The Club’ hard courts were resurfaced.

**1996**

The centenary of the club and season long celebrations were held.

**2006**

The club celebrated 110 years.

The *Poldark* novels have of course been dramatized twice by the BBC, most recently starring Aidan Turner and Eleanor Tomlinson.

As my wife lived in Perranporth, I was able to return in 2010 when we were married and after a few months started to look for a project. I decided to investigate what was occurring at my old club.





Unfortunately, the club had hit hard times and was populated by less than 30 players. The committee at that time had no solution to secure the Club's survival and the Parish Council were at that stage of considering turning the grass courts over to car parking.

A club so steeped in history was looking derelict with three metres or so of brambles encroaching through the stop netting, tennis posts falling over, wildlife inhabiting the pavilion and nets with larger than usual holes!

## Recent History

### 2011

Club about to fold with under 30 members. Parish Council considering a multi-sports area or car park. I became Club Coach and development officer embarking on a series of projects to rejuvenate the club.



**Above:** Work gets under way on the new court's surface.

### 2012

Calendar of Events and Coaching are introduced, a new website built, and a new grounds man appointed. Advertising push to increase membership. New Committee elected.

### 2013 Project 1

Hard Courts are resurfaced and colour coated and flood lights provided. Power supplied to the pavilion – funding from Sport England and S.I.T.A. Cornwall Trust.

### 2014 Project 2

Extensive refurbishment of the interior of the pavilion and toilets – funding from Cory and S.I.T.A. Cornwall Trust.

### 2015

Perran Tennis receives County Community Club of the Year award. Celebration to mark the Grand Opening of the new club facilities.

### Project 3

Refurbishment of the exterior of the pavilion including a new roof – funding from Tennis Cornwall and Tennis Southwest.

### 2016

Perran Tennis receives County Club of the Year award Membership shows a 1000% increase over six years to 325 members.



**Above:** Steve Luck receiving the County Endeavour Cup during 2015.

### 2017

Perran Tennis receives Southwest Region Club of the Year award for 2016 and is shortlisted amongst six other clubs for a national award. 10th April, during a management meeting, a car was driven into the rear of the pavilion causing £16,500 worth of damage, fortunately only minor injuries were sustained by those involved. Insurance pays for repairs to the pavilion completed and a new robust barrier installed to the rear of the Pavilion with parking signage.



### 2018 Project 4

Grass courts 1-3 are dug up, levelled and re-seeded – 25 tons of topsoil are hand sieved by members – new entrance gates are installed together with disabled access – funding from Tesco and L.T.A.



**Top:** The Club today

**Above:** 2018 and the refurbishment of the grass courts.

**Below:** L.T.A. President Martin Corrie alongside the Club Chairman in 2019

### 2019

Further work to grass courts 1-3 including over-seeding, new road signage for members and visitors and general improvements to the access and surrounding area. Visit of the L.T.A. President Martin Corrie.

### 2020

Events and tournaments cancelled, and the Club closes due to Covid.

### 2021

The Club re-opens with a sustained membership of 380 I retire from the Club and a new coach found to carry on with encouraging our junior and adult players.

### 2022/23

The Club continues to thrive with an enthusiastic Committee.

**Steve Luck**

