

GAME, SET AND MATCH!

The Story of Onslow Village Lawn Tennis Club *by Angela Joule*

Back in the heyday of Empire, many brave souls sallied forth from Britain. In so doing, they invariably found time to indulge in games – frequently in the most unpromising surroundings. Cricket has been played on icebergs, footballers have dribbled deftly across minefields and many a bridge table has been set up in jungle clearings.

So when Onslow Village was first planned for development in the early 1920s, two sets of tennis courts were proposed. One set was planned where they are now and another, together with a bowling green, was to be sited more towards Manor Farm. The A3 was then still a distant dream. This second set was, of course never developed.

It was possibly with this in mind that on 6th March 1922 a general meeting of the tenants of the newly-formed Onslow Village Ltd was called with the purpose of forming a lawn tennis club. As envisaged within the original plans, a site adjacent to Wilderness Farm House was agreed upon, to be enclosed on the north side of the sports field. Whilst the terrain was somewhat rough and decorated with cow pats, nothing deterred the enthusiasm of the would-be tennis players.

It was an extremely bold undertaking, as at the time, the population of the village was quite small. Only a few houses had been erected, mainly in the vicinity of Crossways and Wilderness Road; many to provide economic housing for the returning veterans of the Great War. Nevertheless, backing for the proposal was unanimous. Local inhabitants were possibly enthused as a

the 1930s, the Lawn Tennis Club purchased the extra courts from Onslow Village Ltd and these were also to be levelled and sown with grass seed for the coming season. This became the start of the “working party” tradition which, happily, continues to this day in order to keep the courts and clubhouse in top condition.

Archive material indicates that there had been considerable haggling about the amount of rent to be levied (£8 per acre), but eventually fees and subscriptions were agreed. At a meeting on 11th August 1922 the annual subscription for playing members was set at £1.6s.6d. (including balls!). This was a not inconsiderable sum for the time, considering the average weekly wage was around £1.5s. a week; it makes today’s subscription of £100 appear to be great value.

Finally, with a reasonable playing surface and a 21-year lease in place “Anyone for tennis?” became a reality in the village. All went well to begin with, but later in the year concerns were expressed about the risk of cows breaking into the courts due to the inadequacy of the post and wire fence around the enclosure. A budget of 12s was set for the provision of barbed wire fencing. In the event, the contractor’s final sum came to £1.11s.2d. But the beasts were held at bay and all seemed satisfied.

I should mention here that the facilities at this time consisted of an old hut which acted as a pavilion and at the back of the hut was a small extension where there were two or three Primus stoves to boil a kettle for tea. These stoves were always difficult to light and often required a great deal of pumping and priming to get them started.



From left: L/S Maynard, Rita Peggs, Phyllis Ginas, Edwina Williams and Audrey Box

in short supply. After the conflict, the Club continued along its way, but after the 1950s change was in the air. Membership was growing along with the local population and the demand for facilities began to be felt. So, with pressure on the high-maintenance grass courts becoming acute, it was decided to replace these with all-weather hard courts, more likely to resist the British climate.

In the 1960s the Club became fully autonomous when Onslow Village Ltd bowed out of the picture. This meant that the Club became fully responsible for rent and rates payable to Guildford Borough Council, as well as for the maintenance of all its facilities. This new onus appeared to spur on the members as in 1959 it was decided to grace the Club with a new purpose-built Clubhouse. Once again, much hard work was put in by members, some of whom became very proficient at drain-digging. Over subsequent

Court at Wimbledon the previous year.

The enterprise was launched with another British tradition – the formation of a committee. Some of the founder members who sat on this committee were Charles Swayne, Dick Woodcock, Bill Claude and Mr Baker, and it was they who called that inaugural meeting in March 1922. Together with other village tenants, they agreed upon the stipulation that the new Club should be under the partial control of the Society (Onslow Village Ltd), in that two members of the Tenants' Committee should be "ex officio" members of the Tennis Club committee.

It was agreed two courts be made available for play in the first season. These were to be grass courts. The ground required rolling and beating out of irregularities, involving a great deal of voluntary labour from the members. In

Onslow Village Tennis Club was really for the use of village residents only. Those in the immediate vicinity, such as Poltimore Road, had to obtain special permission to join. Tuesday afternoon was ladies' day, so children attending the nearby prep school joined the mothers at the Club for tea.

Young people were encouraged to play tennis at an early age and the playing adults would teach the youngsters to play. There were Tennis Club dances at the "hut" which only stopped when the floor was deemed to be unsafe and eventually the "hut" was replaced when Onslow Village Hall was built.

Golden summers rolled on and no doubt many a cucumber sandwich was consumed at teatime. It is not clear if play was much interrupted when World War II came along, but it is likely, given that tennis balls were

Running a tennis club isn't as easy as it may sound. Constant attention has to be paid to the state of the courts and surrounding fencing. Complete resurfacing of a court doesn't come cheap and currently stands at around £10,000 – a large sum for a comparatively small organisation. Grants have been obtained whenever possible from the Council and interested sports bodies, but the fund raising efforts of the membership have always played a vital part in keeping the Club afloat. Social events like the Annual Quiz Evening held in the Village Hall is one such popular event.

With four courts now operational, the Club continued with both social and league tennis proving very popular. The next major innovation came in the 1990s with the installation of floodlighting. This opened up new opportunities to members wishing to play tennis on darker evenings, particularly in the winter. Strict cut-off times for the lighting have always been observed so as not to cause disturbance to local residents.

The Club currently has around 100 senior members and 100 juniors. In recent years junior coaching has proved very popular and it has always been the desire of the Club to encourage the emergence of the next Andy or Tim. Interestingly, some of the juniors from the 1960s are still members today.

Although the playing of tennis is the main objective, OVLTC has always had a strong social side. In 1997 the 75th anniversary of the Club was marked with a party at which original members from the 20s and 30s were invited as honoured guests. In more recent times many barbecues and brunches have been held and particularly successful has been a series of themed evenings at which food from a particular country is prepared by members. As a result, members have been able to enjoy cuisine from Spain, South Africa, Sweden, Japan and China, to name but some. Nothing better reflects the cosmopolitan nature of the Club and indeed the village. It is all a far cry from the cucumber sandwiches and wind-up gramophone playing the Charleston, but things are still flourishing up on the Rec. And long may it continue!

My thanks to Peter Scurfield and Sheila Lambert for their significant contributions. In compiling this article every effort has been made to check the accuracy of the information. However, as parts of the research are based on people's recollections, some facts may not be completely historically accurate.

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Teatime at the original OVLTC clubhouse in August 1939. From left: Phyllis Ginas, Edwina Williams, Audrey Box, Sam Weaver and Peter Pallot

COMMUNITY NOTICE BOARD

If you would like to tell Onslow Village residents about your group's forthcoming events, or issues that might interest them, please email ovra.news@ntlworld.com or ring 07720 945430.
Next copy date: 11th December for publication end December/early January.

Vivace Chorus

Our next concert at Guildford Cathedral will be a huge occasion: **Britten's War Requiem** which will take place on Saturday 17th November at 7.30pm (pre-concert talk at 6.30pm). Vivace Chorus will be joined by members of Freiburg Bachchor, Tiffin Boys' Choir, The Brandenburg Sinfonia and the Brandenburg Chamber Orchestra and soloists. This is one of the iconic works of the twentieth century and was written for the re-consecration of Coventry Cathedral after the original was destroyed in the Battle of Britain; the message is unashamedly anti-war and entirely reconciliatory. There will be a retiring collection in aid of 'Help for Heroes'.
Tickets: £12-£24 from Tourist Information 01483 444334 or online at vivacechorus.org

Guildford Folk Dancers

Starting in November, we invite you to COME DANCING with us at All Saints' Church Hall on Thursday evenings from 8pm to 10.15pm. All abilities welcome, with or without a partner.
For further details, phone Kath on 01483 480139 or email GFD@stevebrooks.f2s.com. To find the website, simply Google "Guildford Folk Dancers".

Trevor Baylis entertains!

by *Anthony Jacques*

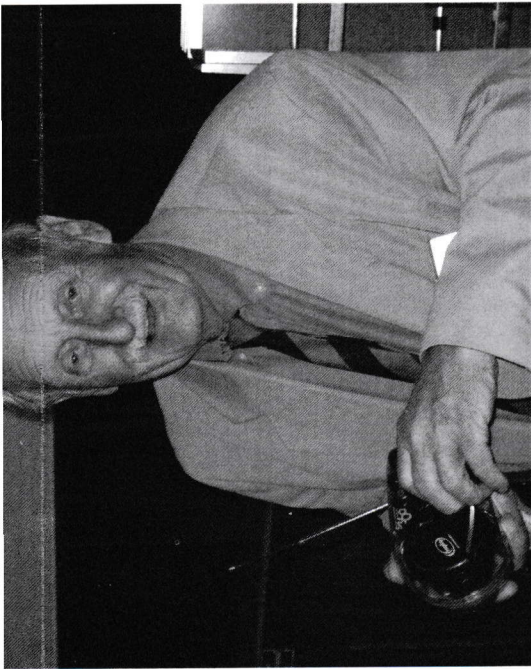
A rapt audience of more than 100 people enjoyed the first of our meetings after the summer break, when inventor Trevor Baylis OBE gave us a fast-paced and humorous talk on how he came into his fascinating walk of life, and how this led to his most famous device – the wind-up radio. Trevor (a life-long Londoner) described his childhood in Southall during the war and his meagre formal education

Welcome to Molly's!

by *Dennis Hurkett*

Among the many advantages of living in Onslow Village is the fact that we have a viable village centre which has become both a commercial and social centre for the residents. The village hall is in nearly continuous use with clubs, exhibitions and meetings taking place throughout the year and we have a selection of retail outlets ranging from a veterinary centre, hairdresser, and a tv and radio outlet, to a long established newsagents which also supplies helpful products including milk and bread. From all of these businesses we get cheery service and a friendly chat as we conduct our business with them. More recently our long serving butcher's shop and deli was, at considerable expense because of asbestos removal, converted into an attractive cafe called Molly's. This was a brave and imaginative project carried out by a company called Green Tangerine, run by Sean and his brother Gary, which runs a fleet of travelling deli and sandwich vans and which also caters for business lunches and events. They named the café after one of Sean and Nicola's children.





MEMORIES REVIVED

A steady stream of visitors called in to the Small Hall on 15th September, when OVRA held its first Archive Day.

There was a display of some of the images and material that OVRA already has in its collection and residents were encouraged to bring in any photos or documents that they were happy to share, so that they could be scanned.

The most unusual item brought in, was a wheel from a barrow probably used in the building of the house in Bannisters Road where it was found!

Local historian David Rose was also on hand, with photos from his own collection and pieces of shrapnel that fell on Onslow Village during the war, which were collected by a former resident when he was a boy.



Marian de Kretser (seated) and committee member Catherine Ward (standing centre), with Sue Harrington and Doris Greenacre. Photo by: David Rose www.guildford-dragon.com

listening to an old wind-up gramophone. Trevor had seen a programme about the AIDS crisis in Africa and heard how education delivered via radio broadcasts could help to halt its spread. Inspired by the gramophone, within days he had developed a small dynamo and successfully harnessed it to a shop-bought transistor radio. Difficulties began with trying to produce a spring motor to gradually release 'the winding-up' into the dynamo in order to power the radio for more than about half a programme of listening. With this successfully overcome (and everything patented) the search for a backer began. After many setbacks and some downright rude rebuttals, some publicity on the World Service harnessed real interest, especially from Nelson Mandela. Now these devices are produced and used globally, with further modifications for solar power, and an adaptor to enable people even to recharge their mobile phone by wind-up means.

Forthcoming Events

All held in The Village Hall in Wilderness Road, Onslow Village GU2 7QR. Complimentary refreshments available from 7.15pm. Talks begin at 7.45pm.

Tue 13th Nov: Flora Thompson – Beyond Candleford Green

Our speaker, John Owen Smith will talk about Flora Thompson whose book was the inspiration for the Sunday night TV drama "Lark Rise To Candleford" together with her subsequent books.

Flora spent her childhood in Oxfordshire but came to live in Headley as a young woman, which is where John lives. He will also bring a selection of the local history books he has written, which will be available to buy on the evening at £6.50 each.

Tue 8th Jan: Surrey Search and Rescue Dogs
Speaker: Warren van der Merwe

Sat 9th Feb: Annual Party with music by Claire Phoenix
Look out for details and ticket prices

Tue 12th Mar: AGM + Talk: The Watercress Line
Speaker: Derek Seaton

Information is correct at date of printing, but may be subject to change – please look out for future publicity or ring 07720 945430 to check.

Molly's provides an attractive and beautifully decorated venue for meeting friends and entertaining, and as a bolt-hole for when you cannot be bothered to go home and cook. If you have not gone in with a friend you usually find someone you know to have a chat to over coffee. We have been served by Lee, the shop supervisor and by Tasha and Alex who have become our personal friends. Alex is now studying at Exeter University and we wish him well and look forward to his return. School mums and dog walkers have regular gatherings there, indeed at times they flock there!

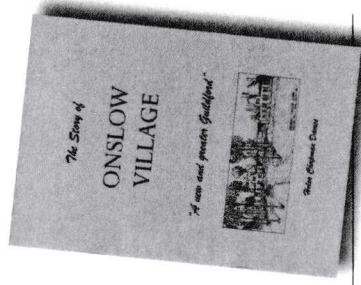
The range of food is considerable covering fine teas, coffees, cakes and lunches (don't look at the cakes if you are on a diet!) The menu is changing periodically with experience to include special offers of coffee with cakes or bacon/sausage baps.

At the time of writing, we have one empty shop premises in the row and we are intrigued as to what is going on behind those whitewashed windows!

THE STORY OF ONSLOW VILLAGE

by Helen Chapman Davies

Several people have asked whether this booklet, originally published in 1999, is still available and we're delighted to report that it is. They are available for £2 each: if you'd like to order a copy, please contact Marian de Kretser on 07720 945430 or at the address below.



If you have anything for the OVRA Archive, or you have any comments, views and suggestions...

...please speak to a committee member at any of the events (they're the ones wearing name badges!), write to OVRA c/o The Village Voice, 17 Friars Gate, Guildford GU2 7PQ or email ovra.news@ntlworld.com

OVRA on Facebook and Twitter



Facebook: search for "Onslow Village Residents Association"
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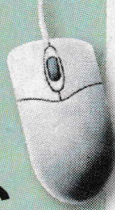
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www.getsurrey.co.uk



Inventor Trevor Baylis (centre front) with members of the Onslow Village Residents' Association. (Ref: SA125234)

Inventor draws big crowd to hear his story

INVENTOR Trevor Baylis attracted a record audience in Guildford with a humorous talk on his walk of life.

Baylis, 75, best known for inventing the wind-up radio, was invited to talk at the village hall in Wilderness Road by Onslow Village Residents' Association.

More than 100 people attended to hear him explain how to bring inventions to the market place, his child-

hood in Southall and his work as a circus and film stuntman.

Visitors heard how he built up a business in prefabricated swimming pools that enabled him to buy a plot of land and build a house on Eel Pie Island on the River Thames, near Twickenham.

The idea for the radio came when listening to an old wind-up gramophone. Within days he had developed

a small dynamo and successfully harnessed it to a transistor radio. After several setbacks, he managed to produce and sell the products globally, with further modifications for solar panel power, and an adaptor to enable people to recharge their mobile phone by wind-up means.

Talks organiser Angela Joule said: "The talk went very well. We had the biggest audience we've ever had - it

was a mixture of members and non-members and a cross-section of ages. They all seemed to enjoy it."

The association's next talk, on November 13 at 7.30pm, will be given by Jown Owen Smith, entitled *Flora Thompson: Beyond Candleford Green*.

It will give details of the life of the author of *Lark Rise to Candleford* - the trilogy of semi-autobiographical novels turned into a popular BBC series.