

# Club History



As far as can be ascertained, Redmarley Tennis Club came into existence in 1925. Prior to that time the cricket team had alternated between a number of grounds and thanks to Mr E Arnall they found a permanent home at Playley Green. This left the whole of the field to be used as a sports field and the Ledbury Reporter produced an article saying that the area was to have a sports field consisting of a cricket ground, tennis court and pavilion. It is assumed that the Club was set up either at this time or shortly afterwards.

It is unclear who was involved in those early days. Post war there are still those who remember such stalwarts as Gladys and Hubert Taylor, Reg and Marjorie Monk, Ted Hughes, Reg and Dorothy Jones and Marian and Nancy Pottinger being active members of the tennis Club. The Club minutes dating back to 1948 have recently come to light and make for interesting reading. Robert Arnall was, for some time, the Secretary and Treasurer. Unfortunately the Club was wound up in the early sixties, the netting and court being dismantled to provide a more expansive outfield for the cricket.

Tennis continued but on various private courts in the area but in the early seventies the Club was resurrected. The Committee consisted of Graham Baum as Chairman, Pauline Summers as Secretary, Robert Wilson as Treasurer and a Committee of Judy Jakeman, Mary Mitchell, Sybil Pratt and Ruth Pritchard. Marjorie Monk was made the first honorary president.

The Club initially had a Club night, meeting and playing at the homes of Captain Windsor Clive and Dudley Wilson. They also arranged friendly matches against other local Clubs such as Dymock and Tibberton. As interest grew, so did the need to establish the Club's own courts. A meeting was held with Captain Windsor Clive and Mike Phillips, as representatives of the Parish Council and the Committee, and an agreed area was marked out where the existing Club now plays.

The early days of construction were interesting, little money was held by the Club and various fund raising activities took place. Unfortunately in those days little or no help was available from the establishment in terms of grants so the original courts were entirely hand made by the local volunteers. The area was rotavated and levelled with the use of a railway sleeper towed over the area. It was then rolled and an old fashioned fiddle seed distributor was loaned by Ruth Pritchard and used to give an even distribution of seed.



The netting was garden wire netting and the posts knocked in by a post hole 'bonker'. Despite this somewhat amateur set up, the Committee was bold enough to enter a men's and ladies' team in the Gloucestershire league. Both teams won their divisions.

By the end of the second year's competition, some disquiet was felt as the grass on the baselines was becoming exceedingly worn. The rest of the grass was patchy and when we heard the opposition say 'the way to win here is not to let the ball bounce', we decided something needed doing, but what? There was no money and lots of play but marking the lines and cutting the grass was a bore and volunteers were hard to find. Eventually the penny dropped - the ball bounced much better where there was no grass.

The Committee decided to cut the grass, sell it and apply Redgare (crushed rock from Drybrook quarries in the Forest of Dean) to produce red shale courts (known as clay on the continent). The LTA gave their advice, it wouldn't work. Gloucestershire LTA gave their advice - it wouldn't work. Major court construction firms gave their advice - it wouldn't work - but it did.



Things were organised, adverts were placed in the Citizen offering turf for sale and a firm was hired to cut the turf into rolls. The day arrived for the cutting and a particularly dry spell meant the machine could not cope with such hard and compacted red soil. The only possibility was to water it all night and try again the next day. The alarm was set and for sixteen hours only two hour's uninterrupted sleep was possible as the primitive watering system had to be moved to ensure that both courts were covered. It worked and the next day the contractor was able to complete the job and off we set with our hired lorry to distribute the rolls of turf. To this day, certain lawns on the Gloucester Abbeydale estate enjoy the benefits of Redmarley turf.



The red shale courts proved popular and although they were not playable in very wet spells during the winter, the rest of the time they were adequate.

The teams continued to prosper, moving up the thirteen divisions to midways. As the Club grew bolder it was decided to convert to low maintenance tarmac courts. By this time the chairman was Brigadier Bernard (Bruno) Elgood and the Club applied for grants and loans. So with guarantees given for the LTA loans by Bruno Elgood, Graham Baum, Muriel Tompkinson and Malcolm

Stallard, the present courts were laid.

The tennis coaching on Saturdays has produced a number of players for the junior county squad with some going onto the full county team. Among those successful were the three Stallard girls, the three Rivers girls, Katie Nelmes, Hazel Ford and Matthew Baum.

The men's team eventually reached division one and the ladies' the premier division.

Things never remain static and the ladies' team had to be abandoned owing to some of its members leaving, injury and other commitments. Both Muriel Tompkinson and Barbara Colcutt played well into their eighties, Barbara only resigning from the Club because she emigrated to find a new life in the sun.

The Club still remained active with two men's teams with the first team hovering around the top divisions of the Gloucestershire league and the second team providing interest for both the aged and youthful developing players.

However the Club lurched towards stagnation. It provided much needed facilities for the population with tennis still being played at league level, Monday morning and Friday afternoon ladies groups and Club night working but all with limited interest.



The one bright spot was that the Saturday morning junior coaching sessions prospered under the coaching of Matthew Baum and it is from there that an almost phoenix-like awakening took place. Parents started taking an interest and some became much more active in the Club. A typical example is Roger Bennett who not only helped with the sessions but took his coaching exam; he is now the Club Captain and promotes active tennis at all levels. This combined with some new Committee members and a new Secretary and with Chairman, John Giles' guidance meant the Club prospered.



Redmarley became Club of the Year in 2009. Membership increased with an active series of social activities from quizzes to the Annual Dinner, a Summer Ball, Frog Racing, Halloween parties, Barn Dances, an annual tennis weekend held at Croyde Bay in Devon and active finals days.

Club Box Leagues, Sunday morning adult coaching for beginners, returners and improvers, Road to Wimbledon and Christmas tournaments, winter indoor tennis as well as all the traditional matches and Club nights provide tennis for all levels.

We now have five men's teams and two ladies teams in the Gloucestershire summer league, all of which are enjoying successful seasons. One of the original team, Mark Rowe, went on to represent Great Britain at the over 45 level. Sadly his time commitment to the circuit and Great Britain meant he was no longer able to turn out for Redmarley. We also have two teams in the Gloucestershire Winter Mixed Doubles league and a men's team in the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Winter Doubles league.

2010 was a busy year. The courts were totally refurbished in 2010 with generous donations from members, local residents and grants from the Lottery, Awards for All and Grassroots Grants. Further growth is planned and the current project is to provide a state of the art Club house to replace the loveable but limited shelter. All of this, coupled with an outstanding view of Gloucestershire from the courts, makes us an unbeatable Club to join. In December, the Club was also voted LTA Gloucestershire Club of the Year.



Also that year, the club launched its website [www.redmarleytennisclub.co.uk](http://www.redmarleytennisclub.co.uk), which continues to provide useful information to members and non-members alike.

In 2011, Redmarley became the first small club in Gloucestershire to be awarded Clubmark status, recognising the club's commitment to providing tennis services to the local community and at county level as well.

In December 2014, the Club was well represented in the LTA awards, the men's A and C teams gaining promotion along with the ladies team. Head coach Graham Baum (pictured on the right) was awarded the Chris Reid Trophy for volunteer of the year, honouring his lifetime achievement promoting tennis at Redmarley and around the county.



In July 2015 we celebrated our 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a Summer Ball. The second ball we had hosted and each time the weather was kind to us. Russell Up Catering provided the delicious food and live band Jagged Hands kept everyone dancing and singing along.

In 2016 we added a second ladies team to the summer league tournaments and also set up a junior committee so that our younger members could have a say in how their club is run and organise their own events. These have included skittles nights; summer fun days and a Christmas

social.

In 2018 the club was successful in fund raising and securing grant funding to build a pavilion. This replaced the much used and weather-worn shelter and hut which had served the club well over the decades.

Graham Baum, the club's longest standing member and former Chairman, officially opened the pavilion on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2018.



Also that year we were awarded the LTA Gloucestershire Club of the Year for the second time and were nominated for the South West Club of the Year award too.

In 2019 Roger Bennett retired from his positions as Club Coach, Club Captain, Treasurer and Committee member leaving a rather large hole to be filled. A short period with an external coach wasn't successful and the coaching programme faltered.

2020 saw COVID-19 close down the courts for the first time in their history (apart from when being resurfaced) and it was a sad day when the padlocks



were shut. Once the first lockdown was lifted, we enticed Graham Baum of his retirement, along with son Matt, and we started up three new coaching groups on a Saturday morning for Adult Beginners/Returners; Juniors under 14 and Juniors over 14. These proved extremely popular and attracted a lot of new members from the local area. Further lockdowns followed but everyone returned to the courts, keener than ever to get out and play tennis.



The club has increased its social activities over the years and now runs an extensive annual social programme including an Annual Dinner; barn dances; beetle drives, barbecues and an annual quiz which has become a popular event for the village and surrounding areas. Finals Day in September attracts a large crowd to enjoy the tennis and the barbecue and social tennis is thriving with both men's and ladies' social sessions during the week and a couple of mixed doubles sessions too.

In 2021 we held a big fundraising campaign to install floodlights and they were switched on in April 2022. This has extended our playing season and enables our summer home matches to be spread out during the season, rather than all taking place in May and June when the nights are lighter. Court use has increased considerably and it's great to be able to play our winter home matches at home too.



Membership has continued to be steady since bouncing back after Covid and the launch of our new coaching programme has proved extremely successful. Three new instructors were accredited in 2023 and new coaching assistants are joining the team when our juniors reach 16. Coaching Development is ongoing and new initiatives including Tennis Xpress, Pair and Play and Cardio Tennis were piloted in 2024.

Current Committee

Acting Chair - Robin Notley  
Club Administrator - Debbie Newman  
Treasurer - Robin Notley

Committee Members

Caroline Bennett  
Jo Clarke  
Bernie Davies  
Sally Loynes  
Robin Notley  
Phill Primett  
Guy Savage

Coaching Lead - Richard Jenner  
Deputy - Kathy O'Keeffe  
Head Coach - Graham Baum  
Instructors - Phill Primett, John Rowe, Garry O'Keeffe  
Coaching Assistants - Gary Watson, Harry, Katy and Alice  
Technical Lead - Matt Baum