

LYNFIELD TENNIS CLUB INCORPORATED

A short history and some reminiscences of the early days. By Peter Thomson

In the mid 1950's the area known as the Lynfield Estate was owned by the then Auckland Harbour Board. It was semi-rural and there were various small holdings being worked as strawberry farms and some of the land was a rough pine plantation. The northern side the estate was bordered by what was then Ridge Road, an unsealed extension of Hillsborough Road, which at the time finished at the junction with Dominion Road Extension. On the eastern boundary the estate abutted the Waikowhai Park Estate which was owned by the Wesley Training College Board. The Wesley Board owned all the land on the seaward side of Hillsborough Road from Aldersgate Road to what is now James Tyler Crescent. In 1956 the Wesley Board sub-divided the area which now encompasses James Tyler Crescent and Stanton Terrace. There was no connection through to the Lynfield Estate and both these streets finished in a dead end facing what is now Canberra Avenue. All the Wesley Board land was leasehold from Aldersgate Road and the annual rentals were very modest from as little as \$10 per annum. The sections in James Tyler Crescent and Stanton Terrace were considered quite expensive at annual leases of \$40 to \$120.

In about 1962 the Auckland Harbour Board sub-divided the Lynfield Estate and the sections were offered for lease with a right of purchase. Initially development was slow and in some areas commercial companies such as Neil Housing built modest homes which were affordable to first home buyers. The area was attractive and with underground power was a leader in this type of development. Some sections had sea views of the Manukau Harbour and the homes built there tended to be somewhat larger and of a higher standard.

Overall the housing was mostly the average modest bungalow and the families were struggling to bring up young children and pay off their mortgage. There was not too much money to spare.

In 1969 the Lynfield Association which at that time was a group representing the interests of Lynfield residents, was making plans to enhance local facilities. The land currently occupied by the Lynfield Tennis Club had been earmarked for community use and was part of the Lynfield Reserve Fund contributed by the Auckland Harbour Board along with some cash as part of the settlement with the Mt. Roskill Borough Council in obtaining consent to sub-divide the land.

The Lynfield Association decided to carry out a survey of homes in the area to determine what residents wanted in the way of sports and recreation facilities. The survey results were overwhelmingly in favour of tennis courts and second choice was a swimming pool. The latter was never seriously considered because of prohibitive costs and the fact that there were other pools available in the Borough. The Lynfield Association prepared some initial plans for a Community Centre on the site in the Avenue. It was envisaged that this would provide for the interest in various group activities e.g. drama, women's fellowship, arts and crafts as well as squash courts.

Peter Thomson was asked by Graham Wilson, the Chairman of the Lynfield Association, to join the Committee to provide some input and knowledge of tennis operations.

LYNFIELD TENNIS CLUB INCORPORATED – A short history (cont.)

In 1970 the Mt. Roskill Borough Council agreed to lease the land in the Avenue to the Lynfield Association. The Association then carried out a door knocking campaign in the wider Lynfield area asking residents to make a ten dollar donation to become a member of the (at that stage notional) Lynfield Community Centre. At the same time people were asked to indicate whether they would join the tennis club if it was formed. The response was impressive and particularly the desire for tennis facilities for children. One hundred and sixty five households paid the initial \$10 fee with no guarantee that they would ever see anything for their money. The door knocking volunteers were well received and had some interesting stories to tell!

In July 1971 a public meeting was called and held in the local Community Church hall in the Avenue. A steering committee was elected to facilitate the formation of a tennis club. The members of the Steering Committee were :-

Peter Thomson (Chairman)

Ian Gough (Secretary)

Dave Kay, Eric Pearce, Graham Minckley, Frank Saunderson, Beverley Wareing and Mary Hansell.

The Committee worked in close collaboration with the Lynfield Association in planning the establishment of the facilities for the Tennis Club. At this time the financial responsibility rested with the Lynfield Association as leaseholder of the land which it was hoped would be the home of the Tennis Club. Rapid progress was made in the following weeks and it soon became apparent that courts would probably be available for use part way through the 1971/72 summer.

A meeting was called for 4th October 1971 of all those people who had indicated their firm interest by joining the Lynfield Community Centre and the Tennis Club. At this meeting the first Officers and Committee of the Tennis Club were elected :-

President	Peter Thomson
Secretary	Ian Gough
Treasurer	Dave Kay
Club Captain	Eric Pearce
Lady Club Captain	Beverley Wareing
Assistant Club Captain	Larry Forbes
Assistant Lady Club Captain	Jean Thomson
Committee:	Alan Burns, Dennis Hunt, Stephanie Branch, Margaret Gough

The Committee negotiated the use of the tennis courts at the Waikowhai Intermediate School so that the Club could get under way. Larry Forbes as a staff member and Jean Thomson as a PTA member at the school were instrumental in achieving this for the Club. The arrangement proved a wise move as members were attracted who would almost certainly have gone elsewhere for the 1971/72 season if no play had been available until the Club courts were completed.

Play commenced in October 1971 and it would be fair to say that most members had never played club tennis before, but this was offset by a great deal of enthusiasm. Jean Thomson had had more experience than anybody else at organizing on court play with her background as Lady Club Captain at Gladstone Tennis Club over many years and the Club was fortunate to have this knowledge available at this crucial time.

LYNFIELD TENNIS CLUB INCORPORATED – A short history (cont.)

At the first Committee meeting on 19th October 1971 which was held at the home of the President at 7.45 p.m.; draft rules were tabled based on those used by The Gladstone Tennis Club and these were accepted for submission to a General Meeting of members. The name LYNFIELD TENNIS CLUB was formally adopted. A pavilion sub-committee comprising Peter Thomson, Ian Gough, Eric Pearce and Dennis Hunt was appointed and a bank account authorized with an initial deposit of \$50 received from the Lynfield Association.

At this time the tennis club was only stage one of the proposed community centre. At the committee meeting on 25th November 1971 it was decided to try and obtain a small building to house equipment etc. Construction of the courts was well advanced and surfacing was likely to be finished by the first week in December 1971. It was decided at this meeting that junior tennis would commence at the end of January 1972. It was agreed that membership of the Tennis Club would have to be restricted to 80 senior members and 80 junior members. Twenty members per court was considered to be the maximum that could be accommodated. In the event we did not restrict senior membership but only the juniors to 90 with a minimum entry age of eight years. George Minckley, Arthur Hansell, Stephanie Branch and Beverley Wareing volunteered to assist with canvassing the area to contact people who might wish to join the Community Centre.

While this was going on the Committee were heavily involved with the planning and construction of the courts. Money was the first priority and funds raised by the initial \$10 contributions and a \$5000 grant from the Lynfield Reserve fund formed the basis of working capital. The Lynfield Association also obtained a contract from the Mt. Roskill Borough Council to clear the Passive Reserve area (behind the existing shopping centre) which at that time was covered in gorse and other undesirable growth. What a job it was but made somewhat easier by Ian Gough obtaining the use of machinery to do the heavy work. The contract earned another \$1000 less a few expenses. This put the club well along the way with the funding needed.

Initial planning was for five courts and the estimated cost in asphalt, including fencing was \$12,810 or if the area was reduced from 28,700 square feet to 25,220 square feet \$11,540. In the event when site work was completed it was found that there was insufficient width to take five courts in line and the number was reduced to four. Money dictated decisions at the time and it was decided to proceed with the reduced court area at the cheaper price. In hindsight this was not a good decision as the run back on courts 1-4 has never been satisfactory given the prevailing south westerly wind. However it did get the club started and astonishingly the courts were completed on 23rd December 1971, only six months after the Tennis steering committee was formed.

Most of the direction in the court building came from the Lynfield Association and they had the ultimate financial responsibility. The nets were swung on 23rd December 1971 and Peter and Jean Thomson and Ian and Margaret Gough hit the first ball over the net in darkness and a little light from the street lights in the Avenue. It was great fun.

Ian Gough was employed by the Downer Corporation and without his skills in the construction industry and knowledge of costs, the courts would never have been built in the timeframe achieved. The construction was not without some drama when a soft spot was detected in the middle of the site which required considerable excavation and more worrying, additional cost.

LYNFIELD TENNIS CLUB INCORPORATED – A short history (cont.)

Club play commenced on 8th January 1972. Coaching sessions for both seniors and juniors were conducted by Alan Burns and this proved a big help to those with limited tennis experience. At that time Alan was the first professional coach at the ASB Tennis centre so it was quite a coup to get his help free of any charge.

Immediately after weekend tennis commenced on the new courts on 8th January 1972 a group of ladies led by Jean Thomson organised an informal mid week tennis day on Wednesday morning of each week. At the main committee meeting on 7th February 1972 Beverley Wareing was asked to organize a special sub-committee of ladies to run mid week tennis. The first Convener was Wendy Person. The sub-committee commenced organised play on 15th February 1972.

At this time the club was not affiliated to Auckland Tennis so the ladies could not participate in interclub competition. However by the following season they were able to enter one "B" grade team which was made up of Norma Peggs, Jean Thomson, Wendy Person and Fiona Rogers. As the club at that time had no facilities the visiting teams were taken to lunch at the Thomson residence and in suitable weather enjoyed a swim in the pool. The standard of hospitality was the subject of much favourable comment by visiting ladies teams. In the 1973/74 year the club had three teams competing.

A representative from the ladies mid week section of the club was appointed to the main committee on 12th November 1973. Ladies mid week members were accorded full voting rights for all General Meetings of the club on 29th July 1975. The Ladies mid week section of the club, starting from the small group in 1972, grew to become arguably the most active and dedicated part of Lynfield tennis. Their contribution to fund raising was very significant in developing the facilities of the club. They held many enjoyable events which raised money for such things as furnishings and kitchen equipment for the first pavilion and the group is still a very strong force in the club today.

The junior section of the club commenced play at the end of January 1972. A group of dedicated parents and supporters attended every weekend and organised the play of the many children who attended on Saturday mornings. Gerald and Beverley Wareing, Eric Pearce, Larry Forbes and Jean and Peter Thomson provided supervision and non-professional coaching. Jean and Beverley qualified as junior coaches at a course at Auckland Tennis conducted by Alan Burns. The number of children attending required that a tiered structure needed to be put in place. Beginners and younger players of limited ability attended from 8 a.m. to 9.30 a.m. Improvers and advanced players from 9.30 a.m. to 12 noon. The emphasis was very much on making tennis fun for all the children.

The club had a junior membership of 85 and to cater for this number on four courts was no easy task. A Christmas function was held on 12th December 1972 and comprised a Yankee tournament and a barbecue lunch. The first junior championships were held in the 1972/73 season and were run in two divisions – beginners and seniors. Professional coaching was arranged for the 1973/74 season. The coach was paid \$6 per hour.

The courts were officially opened by the Mayor of Mt. Roskill on 26th February 1972 and the occasion was marked with other events on the day to provide a carnival atmosphere. A trolley derby attracted a big crowd and there were stalls from various community groups. The Mount Roskill Municipal Band provided entertainment. Beverley Wareing arranged a crazy hats competition.

LYNFIELD TENNIS CLUB INCORPORATED – A short history (cont.)

At the committee meeting on 7th February 1972 it was decided that the club should seek the approval of members to apply for affiliation with the Auckland Lawn Tennis Association which would lead on to playing interclub competitions with other Auckland clubs. In this context the club made a very enjoyable visit to the Gladstone Tennis Club in Parnell and later Gladstone visited with Lynfield in April 1972.

At this time the area around the courts was bare clay and of course there was no shelter from the howling south westerly's. Windbreak screening was attached to the wire netting court surrounds. This acted like a giant sail and the first gale thereafter uprooted most of the support posts wrecking the court surrounds. It was a complete disaster and costly to repair. On one occasion when play was in progress the courts were hit with a tropical downpour, and before we could exit the car park there was a sea of wet sticky clay which stuck to shoes and cars. What a mess! We ran club days from a board propped up in the boot of a car. We had no changing facilities or toilets and nowhere to make a cup of tea. There were toilets in the Avenue and an understanding local dairy owner allowed us to have refreshments in their shop.

The first season closed on 15th April 1972 with a Yankee Tournament. In the evening the Club went dining and dancing at "Calestano" restaurant. Some forty odd members participated and it was a great night out.

There was no organised tennis in the winter time in the early 1970's but the committee were not idle . These projects were completed :-

1) A small building was donated by the Mt. Roskill Borough Council and moved on to the site to serve as a club house and storage area. This was 'in the rough' and volunteers carried out the required restoration and improvements :-

- painting both inside and out
- connected power and water
- built a sink bench and cupboards (Artie McGregor did the work and donated materials as well).

2) An area in front of the building was concreted and a concrete path laid to the entrance gate to the courts.

3) Scoria was spread on the car park to overcome the problem of wet clay and dust.

4) Play equipment was erected for the children.

5) A shelter belt was planted on the west side of the courts and grass was sown in the area between the shelter belt and the court fencing.

On 24th July 1972 the first Annual General Meeting was held and among matters approved were the Rules of the Club, an application to Auckland Tennis for affiliation, and the setting of subscriptions for the 1972/73 season :-

Seniors	\$ 8
Couples	\$15
Intermediates	\$ 4
Juniors	\$ 1.50
Mid-week Ladies	\$ 4

LYNFIELD TENNIS CLUB INCORPORATED – A short history (cont.)

The new Officers and committee were elected :-

President:	Peter Thomson
Secretary:	Ian Gough
Treasurer:	Dave Kay
Club Captain:	Paul Person
Asst. Club Captain:	Eric Pearce
Lady Club Captain:	Beverley Wareing
Asst Lady C/Capt.:	Jean Thomson
Committee:	Alan Burns, Larry Forbes, Janine Webster, Mary Hansell

At subsequent committee meetings in the spring of 1972 other items to be approved included the appointment of the first delegates to Auckland Tennis – Peter Thomson and Paul Person. Permission was obtained from the Lynfield Association to build a volley board and the match committee asked to organize Club Championship and Handicap tournaments (at an entry fee of 50 cents!). At the committee meeting on 4th December 1972 it was reported that the Junior Girls Team had won the first Auckland Tennis interclub pennant for the Club. The club membership at that time was Seniors 75, Intermediates 8, Juniors 85.

Fund raising was an ongoing requirement in the early stages of the Club and all sorts of schemes were promoted :-

Juniors were asked to donate a concrete block for the volley board. Flea markets were visited with all sorts of things donated by members. Those involved will remember the 6 a.m. starts to get set up before the buyers arrived. Gala days were held and many of the women spent weeks sewing garments etc for sale.

Annual raffles were run with prizes of varying sizes. One had a \$3500 diamond ring as the prize and it nearly turned to a disaster as sales lagged, with the men having no interest in the ring. We were reduced to sending our good looking girls around the pubs with a male minder. This produced some success and many of the ladies manned stalls outside shopping centres. In the end it raised \$2351.

In the 1975/76 season fund raising brought in \$6100 made up of :-

➤ Diamond Ring Raffle	\$2351
➤ Fair	\$1623
➤ Xmas Hamper Raffle	\$ 650
➤ Las Vegas Nights	\$ 583
➤ Other small ventures	\$ <u>893</u>
	\$6100

On 15th April 1973 the club took over the Calestano Restaurant for the evening and held a very successful closing function which included the first Annual Prizegiving. Much to the astonishment of the President and without his knowledge, the committee had arranged to have members donate trophies for all events and these were brought in as the President was making a short speech.

LYNFIELD TENNIS CLUB INCORPORATED – A short history (cont.)

The club could not have afforded to purchase the trophies from cash resources and the generosity of members reflected their interest in the club at the time.

First year winners were:

	Championships	Handicaps
Men's Singles:	Peter Thomson	Larry Forbes
Ladies Singles:	Wendy Wilkins	Norma Peggs
Men's Doubles:	Alan & Marc Burns	Dennis Hunt/Dick Korebrits
Ladies Doubles:	Jean Thomson/Norma Peggs	Norma Peggs/Margaret Gough
Mixed Doubles:	Jean & Peter Thomson	Larry Forbes/Amy Wilkinson

The playing conditions stipulated three advantage sets for Championship events. There was no getting away with tie breaker sets. The Men's Singles had a score line of 6-3, 14-16, 6-4 and took nearly three hours.

Lynfield at this time was almost like a village and if members wanted a game of tennis they only had to go down to the courts and people would appear from the surrounding houses.

The committee organised fun tournaments and a teams event drew maximum numbers with the teams being named for their captains - e.g. Pete's Pandas (dressed in black and white of course), Jean's Junkies (hypodermics – without needles slung around their necks - how politically incorrect this would be now!).

The club managed with the little building over the next four years but not without some embarrassment when visiting team members sought the changing rooms only to be told there were none. Players were reduced to changing behind car doors or whatever.

In 1975 the committee decided that a proper pavilion was needed and Ian Gough was asked to try and locate an old house for removal which might be suitable. In his hunt he came across the demolition of the old Cornwall Hospital. He contacted the President and they went and inspected two of the old wards which were for sale at \$500 each for removal. Within 24 hours an approach was made to the Mt. Roskill Borough Council.

The Mayor and Borough Engineer, having inspected the buildings, gave permission for them to be moved onto the site alongside the courts. There was a proviso that they had to be repainted and refurbished within six months so that neighbours would not have cause to complain at the dilapidated appearance. At that time most of the windows were missing and the roof covered in lichen and there was still evidence of their prior use as hospital wards. The moving onto site and placing on foundations cost more than the buildings.

LYNFIELD TENNIS CLUB INCORPORATED – A short history (cont.)

A willing band of volunteers organised by the President and ably led by Don Bracey set to work on weekends and evenings. A time sheet was kept of all voluntary hours and this was costed out as a supporting claim when seeking a Government subsidy. It worked! The end result was that the two buildings were placed a little apart and then joined up to make one. Changing rooms, a kitchen and a storage area took most of one ward and the other became the main room of our pavilion. We were very proud of the finished result which was ready for use on opening day 1975. A social evening was held and members brought along items for use in the pavilion - crockery, cutlery, glasses, a clock etc. The committee were overwhelmed. It was a great shock to have the pavilion burgled a few nights later and most of the gifts stolen.

1975 also saw the club registered as an Incorporated Society.

Two additional courts became a necessity with the rapid expansion of the club membership and in particular the junior section. At the committee meeting on 29th March 1976, it was resolved to investigate building two extra courts. At this time the number of teams entered in Interclub competitions determined the number of courts which had to be made available, which meant that on most Saturdays there was no court space for ordinary members until after 5 p.m.

The new courts were initially planned to be laid where the existing car park is now but again Ian Gough with his contacts in the construction industry was able to come up with a cheaper solution by obtaining a cheap price to excavate the final site.

At this time difficulties had arisen in controlling use of the courts which in terms of the arrangements with the Lynfield Association required some court space for the original subscribers to the Lynfield Community Centre. It is worth mentioning that in the first years the club had to actively oppose a proposal that the club share the courts with netball. Anyone who ever played tennis at the Windmill Road courts will remember the fun trying to decide which lines were for tennis! Ultimately the Tennis Club separated from the Lynfield Association when it became obvious that the planned Community Centre would never eventuate and obtained their own lease over the land.

The establishment of the club and the major facilities took place over the years from 1971 to 1976 with a band of very willing and enthusiastic people. Interest was always high at Annual Meetings and most positions for Officers and committee keenly contested (what a change from the society in which we now live!). The fact that the President had to contest an election every time in that first five years demonstrates how keen everybody was (or were they just keen to get rid of him!).

The club quickly became an established member of the Auckland Tennis scene and has continued the involvement with Auckland Tennis over the thirty five years it has been in existence.