

CHELMSFORD & DISTRICT TABLE TENNIS LEAGUE
HISTORY
THE FIRST 50 YEARS : 1935 TO 1985



CHELMSFORD TABLE TENNIS LEAGUE HISTORY

THE FIRST 50 YEARS : 1935 TO 1985

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1. An introduction by Ian Whiteside written in 2020

To celebrate and commemorate the League's Golden Jubilee in 1985, it was decided that we should attempt to write a history of the first fifty years. It was fortunate that there were still around some who remembered those early days, there were those who had kept records of the League, the Committee Minutes were available and the local press reported extensively on table tennis. All these sources of information were used.

It fell to two members of the Committee, the late Colin Trundle and myself to compile the history. The intention had been to publish it (and we knew it wouldn't be a best seller) but the technology available in the mid-1980s meant that the cost was prohibitive.

The files sat dormant for the best part of thirty years since when technology has moved on and publishing has become easy, if, by publishing, you accept that putting it on the internet is treated as publishing.

I could have edited what was written thirty years ago - after all, quite a bit of it was clearly a case of rose-tinted spectacles – but I thought it best to leave well alone.

So, as you read this, remember that it was how things appeared at the time. When words like 'current' or 'to date' are used, those words mean the position in 1985.

From a personal perspective, it seemed an appropriate time to give this project a push. The 2017/18 season was my sixtieth continuous playing in Chelmsford League and whilst I hope to be able to keep going for a while yet, none of us knows what is around the corner.

Finally, I would hope that someone will pick up the project and maybe update it to reflect the last thirty years. As time goes by, memories become less reliable and so the sooner the challenge is accepted, the better.

Ian Whiteside (2020)

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2. Acknowledgements

Editorial contributions have been made by a number of League Officials, past and present, and their contributions are gratefully acknowledged.

Photographs have been supplied by the Essex Chronicle and the Essex Weekly News and loaned for reproduction by Messrs P McDonald, M Sweeting and D Whiteside, once again, with many thanks.

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3. Introduction to the Original History

I think that those of us who have been associated with the Chelmsford League for some time may be excused just a bit of nostalgia during the 50th year of the life of the League. As your current President, it is my proud task to voice some of that sentiment, although I appreciate that there are quite a number of people who knew the League even before I did.

To go back about 30 of those 50 years, the League was administered by those three great organisers, Chairman Eric White Secretary/Treasurer Percy MacDonald, and David Whiteside who seemed to do everything else! To lose all three within a couple of years understandably left quite a hole, and yours truly was landed with the co-ordination of the remainder of the Committee.

It was a time of considerable expansion; the League grew from four to 10 divisions, as it remains today. The numbers of competitions, team and individual, grew also. And with it grew the number of Committee members required to administer this great enterprise. The expansion can be reflected by comparing the balance sheets; in the Sixties, the money required to run the League was measured in a hundred or two pounds; now we look at over ten thousand. The individual signing on fee was 1/6 (7.5p), now it is £2.50.

But it is not only numbers and competitions and pounds which have increased. I firmly believe that the quality has risen also, both in the standard of play and in the efficiency with which the League is administered.

It is always a matter of personal opinion and argument as to whether today's best players are better than their counterparts of yesteryear. But whereas that very high standard was evident in the first division then, there would appear to be today a far greater number of players, down to perhaps sixth or seventh division, who have more than just a basic idea of the game.

Even more delightful is the large number of junior players who have progressed beyond the beginner stage, and many can hold their own with the established players.

Great credit is due to the increasing number of qualified coaches who gladly lavish a vast amount of time, and often money, and pass their skills to the next generation.

Which inevitably leads to the next 50 years. Battle of Britain pilots were taught "watch the runway ahead, don't look back". Nostalgia we may indulge in for a while, but let us work together for the future also.

Hugh Piper (1985)

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4. Clubs

Over 110 clubs have been in membership of the League, but this figure is complicated by some changes of name. Where a club has been renamed a judgement has had to be made as to whether the club should be included 'twice'. Therefore, in some cases, minor name changes have not been shown separately, but more significant ones - Hoffmanns to RHP for example - are under both headings.

A word of explanation about the dates shown against each club. Where 1970/71 - 1972/73 appears, it indicates the first and last season of membership – in this example, the Club played for three seasons. On occasions, clubs failed to complete their fixtures; where this occurs, a suitable note is made in the text.

In considering the turnover of clubs, it is interesting to note that most of those who are no longer members folded up because either their premises ceased to be available, or no-one was prepared to run the Club. It is also worthy of comment that many clubs owe their formation and continued existence to a dedicated Club Secretary.

Abbey Works 1951/52 - 1967/68

Abbey Works were the premises of Walter Jameson Ltd, who made spectacle frames and associated items, located at Cottage Place, where Pooles Press now stands. They were never one of the League's largest clubs but did reach the First Division for a short while. Pat Dukes, who became successively League Secretary/Treasurer, Chairman and President, was amongst the founder members of the Club. Like many of their type, Abbey lost the use of their premises when the parent company closed and they struggled on for two more years before calling it a day. Their last season found them sharing premises with Rainsford Youth Centre.

Baddow Village 1973/74 - date

Baddow Village reintroduced table tennis to Great Baddow after a gap of 23 years. From a small beginning, the Club gradually expanded to the extent that availability of their premises, Great Baddow Congregational Church Hall, inhibited growth. Their A team were First Division members for a short time but found the competition a little too stiff, although managed a short stay once more.

Bardhill 1969/70 - 1970/71, 1978/79 - 1982/83

This Club was formed by the employees of the Royal Insurance Group and played at the Company's Chelmsford offices in New London Road which were known as Bardhill House, hence the club name. After a break, the club re-entered playing in the new Company premises in Springfield Road. Players leaving the district caused them to disband, but some members are still competing in the League.

Beeches Road 1964/65 - 1976/77

Various Government Departments had, and still have, offices in Beeches Road Chelmsford. The formation of a table tennis club was a result of the efforts of Dick Elford but when he moved on, the club went out of existence.

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Bethel 1970/71

The Bethel ("Tin") Chapel in Chignal Road spawned a youth club who for one season were in the League under this name. However, a disagreement with the leaders resulted in a change of name to Red Star (q.v.)

Blue Circle 1949/50 - 1950/51

Played at the League Headquarters in The Mission Hall, Baddow Road for their two years in the League, premises they shared with Great Baddow.

Bocking. 1937/38

Little is known of this Club who played in the Church Hall in Bocking. In their only season they won Division three, but perhaps the difficulties of travelling to away games led to their non-entrance the following season.

Boreham 1972/73 - 1982/83

The backroom of Boreham Village Hall was the first home to the Club although as they expanded, they were able to use the whole Hall. However, the cost of hiring this became prohibitive, especially as Boreham had a large number of young members, and so the 1982/83 season was their last.

Boys Brigade 1967/68 - 1968/69

The Boys Brigade Company attached to Trent Road Congregational Church had amongst its members some keen table tennis players and for the short time they were competing, they made a big impact. Once their leading players lost interest in the Boys Brigade, they changed their name to Trent Road.

Brentwood Hard Court Club 1951/52 - 1956/57

Brentwood were the successors of the Bromswood Club, playing at Brentwood LTC at Warley. Always a strong club in terms of quality if not quantity, they were forced to withdraw during the 1956/57 season (in February) as a result of the petrol rationing associated with the 'Suez Crisis'.

Britvic 1955/56 and 1962/63 - 1982/83

After one brief flirtation, the Club came to stay for a twenty-year period, matches being played in the staff canteen at the Westway factory. Until the late Seventies, a visit to Britvic was viewed with mixed feelings. Refreshments supplied by the Company were unsurpassed but with the canteen also being used for dances, even the best gripping shoes were inadequate. As with many such companies, a takeover led to pressures on space and eventually the Club was forced to leave, becoming Central Park

Bromswood 1949/50 - 1950/51

Bromswood consisted of the members from Brentwood Tennis Club, playing in the Parish Hall, Junction Road, Brentwood, and they were certainly amongst the best in the League. After two years they changed their name to Brentwood HCC, continuing to run as a mainly ladies Club.

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Broomfield YMCA 1947/48 - 1948/49 and 1955/56 - 1958/59

School Lane, Broomfield was the location of this small club, their premises being the Youth hut, now demolished, at the western end of the road.

Broomfield YC 1967/68

Only members for one season, playing in Broomfield Secondary School (now Chelmer Valley) in Church Avenue.

Budworth 1947/48 - 1948/49

Centred on Ongar, and playing at Budworth Hall, the Club left to join the newly formed West Essex League. Pre-war, the club played under the name of Ongar.

Central Park 1983/84 - present

The successors to Britvic who take their name from the location of their premises, the Bowls Pavilion in Central Park.

Central YC 1947/48 - 1961/62

To some extent the forerunner of YM Juniors. Central played at the Quakers Meeting House (now the Essex Institute Law Library) opposite the Railway Station and had a chequered history. On two occasions they failed to complete their fixtures but the Management Committee always showed tolerance and allowed them back. As with all youth teams, there was a heavy reliance on keenly dedicated adults, and Central depended upon George Mitchell and R Davidson. Central players were the backbone of the early Junior inter league teams, and their hall was used for many coaching sessions, the late Jack Carrington being one of the prominent coaches to visit Chelmsford in the late Fifties.

Chase 1936/37 - 1937/38

The only club in the League's history to have, as their regular venue, a Hotel, The Chase in Ingatestone. They only ever ran one team.

Chelmer 1963/64 - date

One of the League's smaller clubs, they have rarely had more than one team in membership although for a short time they did rise to three teams. Their home for twenty years was the Chelmer Cycling Club in Waterhouse Lane, beside the River Can. A homely atmosphere pervaded this small building, not made for defenders, although a slow table gave the more pedestrian player a little more time as compensation. With the Cycling Club Headquarters due for demolition, the 1984/85 season found Chelmer in the Oddfellows Hall, Legg Street; a room with all the size characteristics of their previous home. That the Club has survived so long is a tribute to the efforts of, initially, the Ransom family, and lately, Frank Sperrin.

Chelmer Cycling Club 1964/65

A single season, using the table located in their hall by Chelmer was enough to convince the cyclists that they should stick to bikes.

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Chelmsford and District Auto Club 1956/57

Few clubs had such a short membership, withdrawing in October 1956. Their premises were next to the Two Brewers in Springfield Road.

Chelmsford Catholics 1968/69 - 1974/75

A small Club who reached the mid divisions of the League before disbanding. Their premises were ultimately the Catholic Hall in New London Road, the club starting life at the Catholic Church in Springfield.

Chelmsford Co-op 1935/36 - 1937/38 and 1948/49

On both occasions, the Club was based at the Moulsham Street premises, still the Co-operative Society's main centre in Chelmsford.

Chelmsford College of Further Education 1975/76 - present

Staff and students at the College (Dovedale) banded together to form a table

tennis section. Their entire life has been spent in the lower reaches of the

League, although there are signs of an upward movement by the best of their three teams.

Chelmsford Prison 1982/83 - present

The staff of the rebuilt Chelmsford Prison decided to enter a team and have recently started to get their name on the honours board.

Chelmsford Police 1972/73 - 1974/75 and 1984/85 - present

The opening of the new Police Station in New Street allowed the sporting constabulary to play table tennis. A lack of interest led to the termination of membership but this was revived and their one team are back in the League.

Chelmsford Post Office 1955/56 - 1957/58, 1961/62 - 1977/78 and 1979/80 - present

A Club who have been in an out of the League and this is reflected in their record. The highpoint was when they benefitted from the demise of Rosebery whose B team moved en bloc to the Waterloo Lane premises above the sorting office. This gave Post Office a team in the First Division, a place they still merited when eviction deprived them of anywhere to perform. The construction of a new Sorting Office and administration block enabled the club to be revived. In their Waterloo Lane days, no home matches were played in December, the Christmas postal rush requiring every available square foot to be used for the main business of the Post Office.

Chelmsford Rural District Council 1935/36 - 1938/39

Started life, for one year, as NALGO (Mid Essex) and were based at the then Council offices in Waterloo Lane, later to become the home of the Post Office. Failed to restart after the War, until Rudisco appeared in 1954/55.

Chelmsford Squash Club 1979/80

Another one-season Club, whose only claim to fame was playing matches in a squash court. Complaints about the white background, and the lack of any suitable alternative, resulted in non-entry the following year.

Chelmsford Table Tennis Club 1950/51 - present

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One of the two longest-serving clubs still in membership of the League, CTTC in its early days shared the Pavilion in New Writtle Street with the Chelmsford Cricket and Hockey Clubs; some notables like Bill Greenwood and Shelia Orrin belonged to all three. With the burning down of the Pavilion in 1963, the Club transferred to Coronation Park as tenants of the Chelmsford Rugby Club. Conditions were not ideal and the old Club spirit waned; the rent became exorbitant and in 1971 they moved to Broomfield, an old schoolroom at the Green. Conditions here were sometimes precarious, the floor 'sweating' in certain climatic conditions and when the Parish Council offered the Hall for sale the Club was interested but the price was too high. The Borough Council offered the Cricket Pavilion at the John Shennan Playing Field but high rent and dwindling numbers forced a further change. A hall on Springfield Green, formerly a Congregational Hall and the home of Springfield, was found and the Club, although much smaller than formerly still survives. As befits a Club bearing the name of the town, they have always been prominent in League affairs and the current President (previously Secretary/Treasurer and Chairman) Hugh Piper, has for many years been a stalwart of the Club. CTTC have always been in the top flight, although in recent years their tenure on a First Division place has faltered for a season or two and they have regularly alternated between promotion and relegation.

Chelmsford Technical School 1969/70

An attempt to run a Club formed of pupils at the Technical School, Patching Hall Lane lasted just one season, largely through the late finishes involved in competitive League play.

Christy 1949/50 -1951/52 and 1959/60 - 1961/62

Played in the canteen of the Company premises in Broomfield Road. Their conditions were so good that representative matches were held there, as were the 1951 Individual Finals.

Church of the Holy Name 1973/74 - 1977/78

Commonly known simply as Holy Name, this Great Baddow club at one time had three teams in membership but relied so heavily on a nucleus of players that when they took a back seat, no-one else wished to carry on.

CIHE/HETC 1973/74 - 1982/83

Starting life as Hid Essex Technical College, the club name changed to Chelmer Institute of Higher Education when the College was retitled. Playing initially in a portable classroom, there was a marked improvement when they moved to the main sports hall. With a constantly changing pool of players, the club-standard varied enormously from one year to another. With the composition of the student membership so uncertain, the decision not to re-enter was inevitable.

City Supporters 1983/84 - present

Recent entrants following a recruitment drive, they play in the Social Club at Chelmsford City FC.

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Conservatives 1935/36 - 1938/39

Little is known about this pre-war Club, but it is believed that they played in the Conservative Club, then located off the High Street.

Cowards 1967/68 - 1971/72

Formed from staff employed by the Chelmsford building contractor, they played in the office premises in Lower Anchor Street. Usually fielding just one team, they did double their strength for a short time.

Crittall Braintree YC 1974/75

Although bearing the Braintree title, the Club played at Crittalls Witham premises, alongside the seniors of the Witham Crittalls teams.

Crompton 1935/36 - 1967/69

One of the big three employers in Chelmsford, Cromptons were also amongst the strongest table tennis clubs. It was however in their later years that they became the top club when some of the Marconi players joined them. They also had the signature of the then English Closed Champion, Chester Barnes, on a registration form and although he played a few League matches, his presence in a Men's Team Knock Out Final led to a walkout by the opposition. Their reign at the top was terminated when Crompton Parkinson sold their Writtle Road factory and although the Club carried on for one more year, it was effectively the end. At one time, Cromptons had the best conditions in the League, their Pavilion in Wood Street being an ideal venue at which many inter-league matches were staged, and later at the Company canteen in Writtle Road (now the Marconi Complex), an Essex v Warwickshire County match took place.

Crusaders 1956/57 - 1960/61 and 1962/63 - 1963/64

The Club was formed from members of the Chelmsford Crusader Class but later broadened membership to friends of sufficient playing calibre. Founder members of Division five, they grew slowly at first, playing in the St John Ambulance Hut, Baddow Road before moving to the old Friars Schoolroom, long since demolished to make room for Parkway. Although winning Division three in 1961, the Club apparently disappeared but were in fact attached to Old Chelmsfordians whose premises they used. Old Chelmsfordians were without a Secretary and the Club was termed 'Old Chelmsfordians - Crusaders'. The arrangement apart from the unwieldy name was not successful and the Clubs separated again the following year. The rapid expansion of Old Chelmsfordians left Crusaders without a home, and support faded. Although entered in 1964/65 they never took part in that season. The guiding light throughout was Hugh Piper who subsequently joined Chelmsford Table Tennis Club as well as holding League office.

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Cundell Plastics 1977/78 - 1983/84

A very enthusiastic band of employees and their friends formed the nucleus of the club. Originally comprising just one team their climb through the lower divisions encouraged others to play. At their peak, they had three teams, one of which was the exiled First Division team from the defunct Chelmsford Post Office. The need for their Westway premises to be used as offices necessitated a move to Widford Hall where a small number of the original members kept one team running until availability problems led to a merger and they began to play under the Natwest banner with whom the premises were shared.

Danbury 1950/51 - present

With CTTC, Danbury share the distinction of being the oldest club in continuous membership, although in their first season they were called Danbury Youth Centre playing in the Congregational Hall. It was not long before they moved to their present premises and they have used various parts of the Eves Corner Playing Field Pavilion, enjoying excellent facilities. The Club started at a modest level and has gradually increased over thirty-five years. One of its characteristics has been the excellent administrators running the Club, starting with Eric Freeman, Marjorie Wake and continuing through Gordon Lightfoot to the late Terry Shepherd. Danbury also signed Chester Barnes but the fading idol never played though the Club gained much publicity.

Eagle 1981/82 - present

Relative newcomers who play behind the Eagle Public House at Galleywood.

East Hanningfield 1978/79 - present

One of the clubs who in a short space of time have made a major impact on the League. In their brief stay, they have obtained a First Division place and are one of the largest clubs. Currently playing at Salesfrith Farm, they started off at Little Claydons Farm.

Eastern Road Construction Unit 1970/71 - 1973/74

The Unit was part of the Department of Transport with offices at Witham and it was here that the team played. Subsequently, the Unit was disbanded but before then a number of players joined other clubs, notably ECC

English Electric Valve 1963/64 - present

EEV are another club who, from modest beginnings are now amongst the strongest in the League, both numerically and in terms of quality. Much of the credit for this state of affairs belongs to Hilary Dowsett who has introduced many youngsters to table tennis, some of whom are now the backbone of the Club. Matches have always been played on the Company's Waterhouse Lane premises, starting in the canteen, moving to the sports pavilion, and finally to the disused staff shop which has made an ideal venue for inter-league matches.

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Essex Chronicle 1971/72 - 1976/77

A few sports minded members of the staff formed a table tennis team and played at the Westway offices. However, the heyday of traditional local newspapers was waning and as staff numbers reduced, the Club went out of existence.

ECC Education 1935/36 - 1938/39

The Club played in the canteen which was situated in the basement of the Essex County Council offices, in Duke Street.

ECC Staff 1937/38, 1946/47 - 1957/58 and 1969/70 - present

Currently the League's largest club they have had three spells in membership, the first for one season only. After the War, they restarted playing in the basement of County Hall but were never a force to be reckoned with. A twelve-year break and they were back, their home being St Marks Club in Cottage Place, a venue shared for a while with St Margarets. Changing circumstances found the Club with the opportunity to use a room in The Triangle, King Edward Avenue, and although the facilities were spartan, especially in winter when outside and inside temperatures were identical, the Club thrived. They were fortunate to have from 1973 as their Secretary Arthur Clark, whose enthusiasm has built the Club to its present size. In early 1985 the Triangle Club was demolished (to make way for the extended County Hall) and the table tennis club moved to Globe House, New Street.

Essex Institute of Agriculture 1935/36 - 1937/38 and 1959/60 - 1973/74

Consisting of students from the Agricultural College at Writtle, the club enjoyed fluctuating fortunes, varying with the intake of students. Probably their only moment of note was when the son of the Chairman of the Malaysian Table Tennis Association was on their roll and played in the League for two seasons.

Essex Police 1979/80 - present

Essex Police Club was the successor to one of the Springfield clubs, made up of both officers and civilians at Police Headquarters. Matches have always been played in the Main Hall.

Estric 1950/51 - 1961/62

Estric was the name of the sports section of Eastern Electricity. Initially, they played in Baddow Road behind what was 'Sams" clothing shop but later moved to the Sports Ground Pavilion in Galleywood Road, Great Baddow. Always a small club they never rose to any great heights in the League, and it was no surprise when lack of interest led to their cessation of membership.

Excalibur 1978/79 - present

The Excalibur Venture Scout Unit centred on St Johns Hall, Moulsham Street, brought a number of younger players into the League. Quite content with their lot, the Club has remained in the lower third of the League.

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Galleywood 1949/50 - 1954/55

Few clubs in the country can have had such unusual premises as this one, beneath the Grandstand of the by-then defunct Galleywood Racecourse. Later they moved to the Keene Hall in Beehive Lane.

Good Easter 1964/65 - 1966/67

The Village Hall was the home of this short-lived Club who only had one team. When the prime mover left the Village, the Club folded.

Great Baddow 1938/39, and 1946/47 - 1950/51

The forerunners of Baddow Village, who played in the Misson Hall, Baddow Road, on the site of the garage adjacent to the Beehive.

Great Baddow LTC 1966/67 - 1972/73

No connection with any of the other Great Baddow teams (although they did drop the 'LTC' after a short time). Nevertheless, their membership was always drawn from the Tennis Club in Ladywell Lane where they played their matches. One team rose very quickly to Division two but in the absence of a club secretary, they faded away, certain players joining other clubs.

Great Baddow YC 1949/50 - 1952/53 and 1969/70

Their second entry to the League was very brief, the Club withdrawing in December 1969, their home on this occasion, as on the first, being the old Sandon Primary School in Molrams Lane.

Grove 1971/72 - 1972/73

Only participated for one season, failing to start their fixtures in the second. Their home was the Grove Lawn Tennis Club in Moulsham Drive.

Harway 1959/60 - 1973/74

When the YMCA Juniors waned, Harway took on the mantle of the premier junior side. Harway Boys Club in Rectory Lane was sporting orientated, and without some of the age restrictions of the YMCA, were able to attract the younger players. The A team were a First Division side to be feared and regularly provided the bulk of the Chelmsford Junior teams in the mid-Sixties. The Boys Club as a whole fell on hard times, and the table tennis section was a victim of the decline. However, most of the players found alternative clubs and continued participating for many years.

Hatfield Peverel 1952/53 and 1982/83 - present

The first Hatfield Peverel Club was a short-lived entity, playing in the Village School. A new, purpose-built, Community Centre gave the Village enthusiasts a suitable venue, and they have become one of the growing and most progressive clubs in the League.

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Heron 1963/64 - 1964/65

When the Essex Water Board opened their new Headquarters in Springfield Road, facilities for table tennis became available but difficulties in raising teams meant the Club failing to complete their fixtures and withdrawing in February 1965.

High Easter 1965/66 - 1968/69

Lasting slightly longer than their near neighbours, High Easter remained at one team only, playing in the Village Hall.

Highwood 1983/4 - present

Recent entrants whose home is Highwood Village Hall.

Hoffmanns 1935/36 - 1969/70

By virtue of being founder members, and prominent in the resuscitation of the League after the war, Hoffmanns still hold the record for the longest continuous membership, if their enforced change of name is taken into account. Although they never quite matched the prominence in either size or quality of their New Street neighbours Marconi, they were for many years one of the major clubs, immense interest being generated by the facilities for employees to play during lunchtimes. Hoffmanns provided a number of the League's principal administrators - Eric White (Chairman), Percy McDonald (Secretary/Treasurer) and David Whiteside (Match Secretary) - together with less well known but nevertheless crucial members of the Committee in the Fifties. However, they did not enjoy great success on the table although a number of individual players left their mark on the record book. Over the years, matches were played in the Games Room (situated on the first floor of the block in Bishop Hall Road) but as the club contracted they moved to less spacious areas of the administration block. Nevertheless, many of the country's leading players appeared at Hoffmanns - Johnny Leach, the late Jack Carrington and the Rowe twins. The creation of Ransome Hoffmann Pollard in the late Sixties signalled the decline of the Club. See RHP for continuation.

Ingatestone 1945/46 - 1952/53 and 1965/66 - 1967/68

The first Ingatestone Club was run by Fred Thorogood who later became League Chairman and were well known at the time for their friendly attitude to the game. Ingatestone were the cause of much acrimonious discussion when they re-entered the League in 1965, their team being of good First Division standard, but there was no vacancy, Division Two was the best on offer. This they duly won but two years in Division One were enough for the Club who left to join the Billericay League. They played in the Fryerning Men's Club in Ingatestone High Street.

Ingatestone Boys Club 1982/83 - present

Newcomers, who have changed their name slightly each year, they were the first winners of the new Ray Clements Handicap Cup. Their home is the Boys Club in Ingatestone High Street.

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Lions 1954/55 - 1955/56

The forerunners of YM Juniors, the Club was started by Fred Hayman playing at the Conservative Club, in the High Street before transferring to the Oddfellows Hall in Legg Street, premises used by a variety of clubs over the years.

Little Waltham 1973/74 - 1975/76

A short-lived membership terminated through lack of a club secretary. Tufnell Hall was one of the better premises in the League.

Maldon Borough 1981/82 - present

A Club who played in the Burnham League for some years, whose members were looking for two games a week, joined the Chelmsford League. Their home matches were played at the Borough Council offices in Wantz Road, but redevelopment of the site left them temporarily homeless, although they are now housed in the rebuilt premises.

Maldon Wanderers 1936/37 - 1938/39, 1947/48 and 1951/52 - present

The early Maldon Club did not have the Wanderers appendage and was the brainchild of Herbert and Ruth Springett who are still involved with the present Club. After one brief season back following the War, they left again to join the now-defunct Maldon League. With Old Maldonians being the sole representatives in the town as members of the Chelmsford League, and some of their players not being able to command a regular game, the incentive was there to form a new Club who, because they were without premises, called themselves Wanderers. Since then they have undergone one or two name changes, the most significant being their spell as Mid Essex Transport Wanderers, this in recognition of sponsorship from a local transport business. From the time the Wanderers were formed until the present day, Geoff Newman has been very much involved in the running and promotion of the Club. Without doubt, the Club has played in more different venues than any other, eight to be precise.

Their first home was Howells Cafe in the High Street, followed by a move to the Rose and Crown, also in the High Street. Two years were spent at the Catholic Hall, Victoria Road, then One year at the Rosary, Wycke Hill, two years in St Marys Church Hall, Mill Lane, two years behind Tooks Cake Shop in the High Street and then a period of relative stability for six years in a room over Maldon Market. In 1975/76, sponsorship was obtained and the Club moved to the premises of the sponsor, at Salcot Mill. Two parts of the area were used, firstly in the administrative offices, and more recently, in the Mill itself, to which access was gained via very steep, dark, stairs, quite an eyrie route on a cold, windy January night. After ten years in Heybridge, the club has moved back, temporarily, to the Market, before hopefully obtaining their own permanent premises at Drapers Farm, Heybridge. Throughout their membership of the League, Maldon have always been prominent and one of the leading Clubs. They have produced probably the most successful player ever in the League, David Newman, and have for over twenty-five years always been in contention for the Division one title. At one time they had eight teams in the League but this number has been halved, partly due to the problems of finding a suitable home. Maldon have always been supporters of all the League's activities, and Geoff Newman was for many years Match Secretary, as well as being a member of the County Committee, contributing notably as founder and Editor of the magazine 'Scimitar'. Quite apart from their own domestic players, Maldon have attracted a number of the country's leading players to give exhibitions. After one Club Finals evening, Victor Barna and Alec Brook provided entertainment, on another occasion, the top England juniors played against

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the Club, the visitors including Laurie Landry and Eddie Hodgson in their number, and to celebrate twenty-one years, the International Club took on Maldon, Laurie Landry also appearing in this match.

Maldon YC 1957/58 - 1959/60 and 1967/68 - 1973/74

For three years, this Club flourished at The Friary but a change of personnel meant their withdrawal. On their reappearance, in improved premises in Friary Lane, the Youth Centre was effectively a nursery for Maldon Wanderers who encouraged and supported the club which merged with the seniors in the early Seventies.

Marconi 1935/36 - 1959/60 and 1963/64 - present

A glance through the honours records shows a dominance of the League in post-war years by one club - Marconi. The bare statistics, however, tell only part of the story. Although Marconi were League members before the War, at that stage they were no more than an average club. The transformation occurred when the late Bill Lang took charge. Bill ran the Club with a dedication and determination that few could match - and the Social Club trophy cabinet bore witness. Marconi though were not just successful they were also big, as befitted the town's largest employers. Their peak season was 1955/1956 when they supplied twelve of the 63 teams in the League. Whilst this number has since been equalled, it has to be remembered that the League was only half its present size. At one stage, Marconi had four teams out of the twelve in Division One, and there were moves at an AGM to introduce a rule to limit the number of teams any club could have in the top Division - a proposal that was quite properly defeated. The Club were helped by a benevolent employer. The works canteen in New Street was their home for many years and those who played there in recent seasons would find it remarkable that players just wandered in and out - the security-conscious modern company was nowhere to be seen.

1960 was the turning point for Marconi. They decided to join an inter-company competition played in business time, and for which it was suspected appearance money was paid. The loss of such a big club was a blow to the League but the exodus of players was not total as many joined other clubs so swelling their ranks. The constant competition against other Marconi establishments soon lost its appeal and after a three-year break they rejoined the league, their A team appearing in Division Two, the star players having donned the colours of other clubs. The early Seventies saw a brief resurgence in the Club's fortunes, the A team returning to the First Division in 1970 for a brief visit, a route with which they became familiar. Their venue was still New Street, but to gain entry it was necessary to provide personal details, and possibly undergo a search - a far cry from the easy-going days of the Fifties. Eventually, security became too intense and in 1983 a move was made to the canteen in Waterhouse Lane where they stayed for two years and now they are housed in the Beehive Lane Marconi Club.

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METC - see CIHE

Moulsham Lodge 1961/62 - present

This club was born on one of the many new housing estates built on the outskirts of the town. Initially, matches were played in the British Legion Club off Baddow Road. The Club quickly grew and four teams remained at the Legion whilst space was found for two more in the now-demolished White Hart in Tindal Street. This latter venue was short-lived and the Congregational Hall in Great Baddow (later to become home of Baddow Village) was used for the overspill until in 1973 the construction of a Community Centre in Waltham Glen enabled the Club to expand. Even so, pressure on space-restricted them to a single evening home night, although with three tables, they have consistently run six teams.

Moulsham.YC 1951/52 - 1955/56 and 1962/63 - 1964/65

Played at the Moulsham County Secondary School in Princes Road but were always a small club.

Nalgas 1962/63 - 1965/66 and 1969/70 - 1970/71

A small club made up of employees of what was then the British Gas Works in Wharf Road. They finally went out of existence in 1971 at about the time the Gas Works themselves were closing.

Nalگو 1935/36 and 1966/67 - present

Strictly speaking, their first entry was as Nalگو Mid Essex, being the staff of the Rural District Council who the following season became Chelmsford R.D.C. Reformed by the Chelmsford Borough Council employees, the premises were the basement in the Civic Centre, Duke Street. Initially, members were from staff only with some joining from the Essex River Authority, but in the early Seventies, some players from Rudisco TTC joined. With numbers increasing, the Club boasted seven teams but by the end of the decade membership diminished and the Club is now down to just one team. 1984 saw a change of venue to the new staff recreation room in the recently extended Civic Centre Offices.

National Provincial Bank 1965/66 - 1967/68

One team of bank employees made up this club, who played in the offices above the National Provincial Bank in Tindal Square (now the Midland Bank building), the entrance being via the main bank doors! After three seasons, they changed their name following a merger of the National Provincial and Westminster Banks.

National Westminster Bank (Natwest) 1968/69 - 1975/76 and 1983/84 - present

Successors to National Provincial, their first season was spent in the Pavilion at Melbourne Park, moving to the new National Westminster building in the High, Street. However, security problems in the new offices led to the club closing. However, they rejoined the League in 1983 having found an alternative clubroom at Widford Parish Hall

Nissen 1970/71 - 1972/73

The sports equipment manufacturers in Wash Road Hutton was the base for this club, who also played in the Billericay League.

Old Chelmsfordians 1950-54 - 1965/66 and 1973/74 present

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The Old Chelmsfordians Association club in Lawford Lane has always been the home of the table tennis club. Their first spell in the League was as a small club and when restarted in 1973, it was at a modest level. However, the good conditions and enthusiastic secretary attracted new members to the extent that they won the First Division title in 1983/84 as well as being one of the League's largest clubs.

Old Maldonians 1937/38 - 1938/39 and 1950/51 - 1953/54

Old Maldonians were made up of former pupils from Maldon Grammar School, and this was their home. Old Maldonians were for a short while members of the Maldon League which existed in the late Forties. Amalgamated with Maldon Wanderers at the end of the 1953/54 season.

Ongar 1937/38

A single season at the Budworth Hall for a team who found travelling difficult in pre-war non-motorised Essex. They did reappear after the War in the guise of Budworth

Police Cadets 1973/74 - 1976/77

With a captive residential pool of youngsters, the Police Cadet School was an ideal location for a club. They achieved a place in the middle of the League before being forced to quit upon the temporary closure of the Cadet School when recruiting of cadets was phased out.

Pope and Smith 1938/39

Successors to Tindal Sports who did not reform after the War, two of their leading players (one of whom was also an Essex cricketer) being victims of the hostilities.

Public Assistance 1945/46

One of the clubs present when the League was reformed, they owed their existence to the War and when the need for their services ceased, so did the table tennis club. Matches were played at the Government Buildings in Beeches Road where a club of that name was to reappear in due course.

Purleigh 1961/62

For just one season, this village club played in the Eveleigh Hall.

Rainsford School 1974/75 - 1978/79

Owing a great deal to one of the teachers at the School, Paul Woolnough, this club at one time had six teams in the League. From a small start, the success of one team encouraged other pupils to play and for a while, there was a clamour to join a team. However, adult help was minimal and transport to away games became such a problem that Paul Woolnough decided he could no longer continue, and the Club folded up.

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Rainsford YC 1951/52 - 1958/59 and 1960/61 - 1970/71

The school premises of the same name in Fox Crescent were the home to the Youth Centre Club. Re-entry was due to a keen Warden, and when he moved on in 1962 the Club was run by a 17-year-old who later went on to become League Secretary and Chairman, Ian Whiteside. Interest waned after he left in 1968 and although they continued for a few more years, the end was in sight.

Red Star 1971/72

Red Star lasted just one season, being the successors of Bethel

RHP 1970/7 - 1981/82

Taking over from Hoffmanns when the Company name was changed, it was as if the new corporate image had sapped the spirit of the table tennis club. They never had any impact on the League and were continually shunted around the contracting works premises in Bishop Hall Lane. Their final abode was the sports ground in St Fabians Drive where they had to share a room with the snooker section. It came as no surprise when they failed to re-enter for the 1982/83 season, having dropped to just one team in the previous campaign - a sad end to a club who had given so much to the League.

Rodings YC 1973/74 - 1974/75

The Youth Centre at High Roding was host to the most westerly club in the League, and with a Maldon YC team in the same division, there was a fifty-mile round trip for the farthest fixtures. This, more than anything else, led to them leaving the League.

Rosebery 1962/63 - 1975/76

Mention of Rosebery inevitably summons memories of the Levett family. Few players in the Sixties would have failed to visit the Rosebery club, housed in a large garage at the rear of Pat and Grace Levett's residence. The feature of the arena was the balcony from which the non-players watched, situated at one end of the table so that the spectators only saw half a game. Few players too missed the opportunity to play at Rosebery where the cakes of Mrs Levett proved more than adequate mid-match refreshments. Such matters were, of course, incidental to a Club who dominated the League in the mid-Sixties, taking over the mantle, and many players, from Marconi. Rosebery did a great deal for the League, Mrs Levett becoming Assistant Divisional Secretary, and many inter-league matches were held at 29 Rosebery Road. They were also one of the largest clubs of the era, at one time running seven teams. Ironically, this was a major contributory factor in their demise, as there were so many comings and goings at what after all was someone's home. In addition, son Julien took the plunge and got married, leaving the family home, and this set the seal on the Club's end. However, their name lives on in the annual Rosebery/Pope and Smith Award, partially donated by the Rosebery Club.

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RNORC 1947/48

Rudisco 1955/56 - 1971/72

One of the League's smaller clubs, who nevertheless managed to get a team in Division One. Staff from the Rural District Council formed a club which played in the basement of the Council Offices recently demolished, in New London Road. Always a friendly club, they had teams of varying strengths but suffered when players left the Council's employment. They could probably boast the 'oldest' team in the League for at one time three of their B team were all over 60, Maurice Butcher, Tom Archer and Fred Martin. Perhaps anticipating the 1974 demise of the RDC, Rudisco themselves ran out of time when pressure of space deprived them of their playing area.

Sadds 1961/62 - 1962/63

Employees at the Maldon based timber merchants entered the League, playing at the firm's sports ground in The Causeway. Although their membership of the Chelmsford League was short-lived, they have continued to play in the Burnham League.

St Johns Hospital 1967/68 - 1969/70

A large overseas contingent was the feature of the club based at St Johns Hospital, Wood Street. Although many were of Oriental origin, none were outstanding, demonstrating that not everyone east of Singapore is a world champion.

St Margarets 1956/57 - present

An offshoot of Springfield, St Margarets were made up of ladies who worked at the Police Headquarters. However, once they became St Margarets they never played within the H.Q. complex although they took their name from one of the roads within the Police area where their Secretary lived. Their first premises were Kenmore Hall, behind the Two Brewers in Springfield Road, later moving to the Girls Friendly Society hall in Cottage Place. From there they went to the Catholic Hall, London Road before reaching their present home, the Oddfellows Hall. From 1950, when they started out at Springfield, for over twenty-five years the same five ladies played together in one team (for a short while there was an additional team), always in the lower part of the League, but always a friendly evening out. News of their twenty-five years together reached the press and as a result, an article about the Club appeared in the 'East Anglian Daily Times'.

South Woodham 1972/73 - 1982/83

The growing area of South Woodham was bound to produce some table tennis players, and so it proved. However, the bulk of the teams competed in the Burnham League but in search of stronger opposition, they entered a team in the Chelmsford League. South Woodham retained a First Division place for some years and even when towards the end they were down to one team, this was in the top flight. The club continually had problems with venues, the Women's Institute hall in Hullbridge Road being their home for the majority of their membership.

Springfield 1945/46 - 1950/51 and 1955/56 - 1973/74

The first Springfield played in the main hall at Police Headquarters and were made up of the female staff who worked there or lived in the adjacent police houses. These same ladies formed St Margarets in 1956. The name Springfield was reincarnated by the Headquarters personnel of Essex Police who retained a long membership in spite of staff changes. Their whole life was spent in the mid and lower reaches of the League. Like so many clubs, they ran out of administrators and this brought about their downfall.

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Springfield Community Centre 1980/81 - 1981/82

The huge growing estates to the north and east of the town contained their share of table tennis players, and the opening of a Community Centre enabled them to play on their own doorstep. Unfortunately, the cost of the facilities, and the distractions which had to be endured, forced the club to close.

Springfield Park Baptist 1962/63 - 1964/65

A small room in the Baptist Church, Sandford Road, was the home of this Club, who had two teams, mainly consisting of young players.

Springfield Trinity 1956/57 - 1959/60

Played in the Vestry Hall on Springfield Green, and the creation of brothers Jack and Ken Searles.

SPD 1973/74 - present

Fluctuating fortunes have characterised the existence of SPD, their playing strength varying between one and three teams. The staff canteen in Westway has proved an adequate home throughout their membership.

Sun Life 1977/78 - present

With just one team, Sun Life have remained towards the bottom end of the League but have always been a sociable club, playing at Britvic House in Broomfield Road.

Technical College 1949/50 - 1950/51

Forerunner of the Mid Essex Technical College two seasons were enough to provide the club with an early winner of the Junior Boys Singles.

TEGC 1977/78 - present

Players who had previously appeared for Chelmsford Post Office formed a club at the Telephone Exchange predating the official divergence of letters and telephones. Two teams have been their maximum, never rising above Division Four.

Tindal Sports 1935/36 - 1936/37

Became Pope and Smith and counted amongst their players at least three Essex cricketers, Peter and Ray Smith and Dudley Pope. Not surprisingly, the Club played in the Chelmsford Cricket Club Pavilion.

Trent Road 1969/70 - 1970/71

Successors to Boys Brigade Trent Road lasted only a short while but did manage to reach Division six with their youthful team, most of who found a niche elsewhere.

Trinity 1981/82 - 1984/85

No relation to Springfield Trinity the new Methodist Church in Rainsford Road made an ideal venue for this club of youngsters.

Tyrells Sports 1949/50 - 1950/51

A small Club who played at 78 Springfield Road, the home of their Club Secretary, a Mr J Flanagan.

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War A E C 1946/47

All that is known of this one team Club is their full name, the War Agricultural Executive Committee.

Waterloo 1946/47

Widford YC 1946/7

Played in the Village Hall at Widford, now the home of Natwest.

Westlands YC 1962/63 - 1965/66

Entered the League at a time when Youth Centre table tennis was flourishing, although Westlands never achieved the prominence of some of their contemporaries. Their home was Westlands School (now Hylands) in Charnwood Road.

Wimpey 1974/75 - 1979/80

The Witham based civil engineering firm had an excellent social club in Crittall Road, and this proved a very popular venue with visitors. The club occupied the lower reaches of the League but dropped out when the keenest players moved away.

Witham Crittall 1959/60 - 1975/76

Another club who found that their main league, this time Braintree, did not give strong enough competition, and so joined Chelmsford. They soon became one of the top teams by virtue of attracting the best players from Braintree as well as one or two of the top Chelmsford players, especially when Cromptons ceased. With the facility for three tables in the Braintree Road canteen, it was often possible to see good class play on an adjoining table, and it was not unknown for two games to stop to watch a particularly entertaining match on the third table. A shortage of administrators caused problems for the club, who were suspended for a short while in the 1975/76 season because of non-payment of fees. With this record building up and with so few of those who played for the club actually working for Crittalls, it was inevitable that they would fold up. It was, therefore, no surprise when the Club failed to enter any teams by the deadline for the 1976/77 season.

Witham Methodist 1949/50 - 1958/59

A very popular club run efficiently by Ernie Songer whose daughter Paula, now Mrs Cant, became the first Girls Singles champion, they started in the Methodist Church Hall before moving to the Youth Centre in Spinks Lane. Within a year they were off again, to the Constitutional Club, a brief stay thence to the British Legion Hall in Mill Lane, Witham. After two years it was on to Church House in Collingwood Road, their final abode before becoming Witham Crittall

Witham Town FC 1985-86 - present

A new club to the League, although well established in the neighbouring Braintree League, their sole team secured a First Division place, which their record to date fully justifies.

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Writtle 1970/71 - present

One of the successes of the past fifteen years, Writtle started life at Longmeads House, also known as Writtle Community Centre. An enthusiastic group of players ran the club which quickly grew. Their A team, starting in Division four with only one change of player, reached Division one and although they subsequently surrendered that place, the club remains strong, largely through a sound junior policy. Outgrowing the accommodation at Longmeads, they teamed up with other sporting bodies in the Village at Paradise Road Pavilion where their facilities are amongst the best in the League.

YMCA 1935/36 - 1938/39, 1946/7 - 1953/54 and 1956/7 - 1971/72

Throughout the country, YMCA's were usually the home of local table tennis and it is a little surprising that Chelmsford YMCA have (with the exception of the junior section) played so little part in the League's activities. In the early Sixties, the club benefitted from an influx of ex YM Junior players but even so never made a real impact. It was a blow to the League when in 1972 one of the few truly 'open' clubs to which any potential player could be sent, should decide to leave, and all attempts to entice them back have failed.

YMCA Juniors 1956/57 - 1958/59 and 1965/66 - 1969/69

Mention of 'YM Juniors' and two names immediately spring to the mind of all those who were around at the time - Fred Hayman and Mark Sweeting. The YMCA had teams in the League for many years but these consisted mainly of senior players. Fred Hayman, one of the adult members was a keen table tennis man and encouraged the youngsters to join the YMCA and to play table tennis. So successful was he that there was soon a long waiting list. One of the reasons for this remarkable growth was the desire to emulate the top players who were by this time gaining local recognition. A rapid rise through the divisions brought the names of Mark Sweeting and Nigel Bates to the fore, and they were backed by other quality players such as Richard Bloomfield, Alan Clancy, Barry MacDonald and Paul Olive. A place in the lowest team was a coveted honour and could only be achieved through much practice and regular attendance on club nights. That players with little hope of selection turned up week after week says much for Fred's leadership. Whilst it was the Club's players who, quite rightly, took the limelight, Fred was the driving force and when the youngsters started to fall from the high standards acceptable to him, he decided to sever his connection. That the first YM Juniors only existed for three years belies the effect the club had on the League - they brought for the first time a huge influx of young players, many of whom are still playing twenty-five years later.

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5. TEAM KNOCK OUT CUPS

Although the League itself celebrates 50 years, the team knock out events have not quite reached that landmark. One year after the League competition started, the Men's Knock Out Cup was introduced. The winners were YMCA who completed the League and Cup double. In those early days, the playing format of the four-man team, together with the limited events in the Individual Championships, allowed all the finals to be held on one grand Finals Night. Hoffmanns continued the double trend in the next two seasons and Maldon became the first Ladies Cup champions in the last season before the Second World War, they too taking the Ladies League title.

On the rekindling of the League in 1945, the committee resolved that the cup competitions should start immediately, with an entry fee of 1/- (5p) per team.

The all-conquering Marconi club were to dominate the Men's event, as they did the League, for the next fifteen years with Crompton finally breaking the stranglehold in 1960-61. During the same period, the Ladies event (called Women's at the time) was more evenly distributed, with Chelmsford Table Tennis Club recording four wins, including a hat trick in the late fifties and early sixties. The next decade saw more of the competing Men's teams having a share of the glory, but Rosebery had more action than most. Meanwhile, Crittalls Witham were dominating the Ladies events, with seven consecutive wins.

The seventies, apart from three early success by Rosebery before they disappeared from the scene, belonged to Maldon Wanderers, or Mid Essex Transport Wanderers as they were briefly styled. The Maldon run of success was briefly upset by Danbury in 1977-78 when Maldon turned out a man short leaving the village club to win just one game to take the title. Not to be outdone, Maldon ladies added that trophy to the cabinet on all but one occasion. Since 1980, Maldon kept their hands firmly on the Men's Cup until 1984 when Old Chelmsfordians recorded their sole success to date, but ECC have become the top Ladies team of the period.

In the late Fifties, the League took the decision to allow men and women to compete in the divisional competition, and it was a natural extension to introduce a Mixed Knock Out event, the first competition taking place in the 1957-58 season. Needless to say, Marconi were the first winners and they repeated their success for the next two years. With the demise of Marconi, the trophy was shared around, although Maldon Wanderers lifted the cup five times during the sixties. The seventies, apart from the first two years, saw Maldon dominating the event with eight consecutive wins. East Hanningfield halted the run in 1982-83 but it was only a temporary loan for Maldon regained the trophy and it is still in their possession.

The Restricted Cup was introduced at the same time as the Individual Restricted Singles, for teams in Division 4 and below. As would be expected, it has generally been won by teams placed highly in Division 4, teams who have often gone on to other divisions leaving the way clear for a new winner. Harway took it the first time and for the next ten years, a new name was added each season. It was not until Chelmer were successful in 1972-73 that they became the first team to win the trophy twice. In the mid-seventies, Mid Essex Technical College emerged as the Restricted specialists winning in 1976 as a Division 8 side, beating a team from Division 5 in a tense and exciting final causing the Club Secretary of the day to lose his equilibrium completely and take to his feet shouting, fortunately not during the play. METC went on to complete a hat trick and then won again after a year's break, from when ECC became the team to beat. Although not quite able to emulate the METC hat trick, they have won the trophy in three of the last four years.

The 1984-85 season saw a new event taking its bow - the Handicap Cup. It attracted a massive entry and such was the success of the first season, it is certainly here to stay. The

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handicappers burnt the midnight oil trying to get it right and who would say they did not succeed when the final was played between two teams domiciled in the lower Division, Ingatestone Boys Club B and Old Chelmsfordians D, the former being narrow winners.

Researching the League minutes, little is mentioned about cup competitions unless there is some particular drama or problem. However, hidden away to be sure are plenty of cases where teams have been disqualified for playing out of order and a classic is an occasion where a much respected Club secretary inadvertently handed scorecards to the wrong teams, and found them fulfilling the wrong fixtures. The Committee felt bound to eliminate the teams on the grounds that the players were adjudged to have played for more than one team in the competition. However, the one occasion when the cup really hit the headlines centred around a final that never was. The 1967-68 Men's event developed into what was expected to be a close and exciting final between the leading teams, Cromptons, and Rosebery. However, on the night, Cromptons turned up with Chester Barnes, the whiz kid of English Table Tennis at the time, in their team. He had not participated in any previous round and it appeared to Rosebery that he had been registered specifically for the Final. They refused to play and walked out in protest, conceding the match to Cromptons. Whilst Cromptons were undoubtedly guilty of sharp practice, they had not broken any rules, and it was Rosebery who were criticised for bringing bad publicity to the League. However, they had made their point and at the following Annual General Meeting, a rule change was passed to prevent a player from taking part only in the Final of a competition. This rather unsavoury affair is, fortunately, one of the few blemishes on what have generally been sporting and enjoyable competitions, although the 1984 Final was also unplayed, an action which resulted in the suspension from the following season's competition of the offending Club, East Hanningfield.

In every sporting competition, there is something special about the sudden death nature of knock out cups - those run by the Chelmsford League are no exception.

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6. CLOSED TOURNAMENTS

From the forty-eight entries in the first singles competition, the Annual Championships have now become the highlight of the season, with over 230 entries and 700 games played during the Tournament weekend.

The first event held was the Chelmsford Closed Individual Championship and the preliminary rounds were played during many evenings at various venues and at the semi-final stage, Phillips (Marconi) met George Everitt (Conservative Club). The local critics had prophesied a win for Phillips but it was reported in the local papers that 'Phillips had a slight attack of nervousness with Everitt taking the first set 21-19. He then showed a real splash of form by winning 21-19 in the second. In the third set, both players returned apparently impossible shots but Phillips won 21-13. In the fourth set, Everitt secured the first 5 points but Phillips qualified to play in the Final at the Corn Exchange on 27 March 1936 with a 21-15 win'.

The other semi-final was reported as a 'slight surprise' with Roger Merrifield (YMCA) beating Reg Taylor (Tindal Sports) after a hard fight. Roger took the first and second sets at 21-17. Reg made a remarkable comeback and secured the third set 21-17. In the fourth, Reg fought hard but Roger excelled to win 21-17 to qualify to meet Phillips in the Final.

In the Final, the local reporter said that "Phillips had some fine defensive strokes but was unable to find any effective kill for the winner's fast forehand drives', and Merrifield became the first name on the Pope and Smith trophy. Afterwards, an exhibition was given by W Bergi, S Profit, and T Sears who were all members of the English Swaythling Cup team, and G W Marshall of the USA team.

For the following season, it was decided to hold separate Men's and Women's Singles together with a Men's Doubles event. Again, the preliminary rounds were spread over many evenings and various premises but the Finals were played this time at the London Road Drill Hall. Peter Smith, Tindal Sports, won the Men's Singles beating H F Head (Maldon) 21-18 21-18 11-21 22-20. Bill Little and Chris McKay (Hoffmann) became the first holders of the Men's Doubles when they overcame Peter Jackson and Percy Wood 21-19 21-15 21-19. In the first Women's Singles, Nora Short (ECC) beat Marjorie Shipstone (Cromptons) 21-18 21-12.

The Finals for the 1937/38 Championships were held at yet another venue, the Cathedral Hall and they were notable for the first clean sweep of Men's Singles and Men's Doubles by Tom Morgan (Hoffmann). In the Singles semi-final, he defeated H G Butt (Old Maldonians) in three straight games whilst W J Reed (YMCA) overcame Freddie Dray(Maldon) in the other semi-final, also in 3 games. In the Final, 'Reed was constantly on the attack and built up a 17-11 lead in the first set but Tom's severe chop was more evident as he pulled up to win 21-19. He went on to win the next two games 21-12 21-11 for a comfortable victory'.

Peter Smith had been unable to defend his title as he had been touring India playing cricket for Lord Tennyson's XI!

In the Women's Singles the local reporter said that in contrast to the fast Men's Final, the match was much slower and defensive. Most of the attacking shots came from Miss Joan Mayers (Maldon) who eventually got the better of Marjorie Shipstone (Cromptons) to win 15-21 21-16 21-19. In the Men's Doubles Tom Morgan and Chris Wilkes (Hoffmann) defeated the defending champions, Little and McKay 21-12 21-14.

There were two new events, the Women's Doubles and Mixed Doubles, and in the Women's competition, Audrey Hignett and Miss Vera Smith won the title when beating Nora Shortt and Miss

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Olive Kent (ECC) 18-21 21-10 21-15. The first winners of the Mixed title were Nora Shortt and Wilfrid Amos (ECC) who overcame Miss Joan Mayers and Peters (Maldon) 21-14 21-17. Significantly there were already requests for the events to be held on one or two evenings only.

The 1938/39 season saw none of the defending champions retain their titles. The major surprise was in the Men's Singles when Tom Morgan was beaten in the early rounds. Bill Little took advantage of this to win the title and he also won the Men's Doubles for the second time with Chris Wilkes when they defeated Springett and Clark (Maldon). Ruth Springett (Maldon) won the Women's Singles and she made it a double when she won the Mixed for the second time with Freddie Dray (Maldon) against Mrs Hart and Stan Precious (Great Baddow) in the Final. The Women's title was won by Mrs Helen Bass and Miss Eva James (Maldon) following a successful final match with Audrey Hignett and Miss Vera Smith.

The Immediate Post War Years

With the reforming of the League in 1945, it was decided to hold only the Women's and Men's Singles charging 1/- (5p) per person. The Finals were held at the Crompton Parkinson Social Hall on Friday 15 March 1946, and in the Women's event, Florrie Cook (Hoffmann) beat Miss P Pettit (Marconi). The final of the Men's Singles resulted in a win for Ted Mackay (Marconi) over Reg Sleet (Marconi).

The 1946/47 season saw the first Men's Singles win for Charlie Wheeler and he completed the double when taking the Men's Doubles with Ted Mackay. Marjorie Shipstone had the first of 4 successes in the Women's Singles whilst Kit Whybrow (Cromptons) had success in both the Women's and Mixed Doubles. The Finals were played on 22 March at yet another new venue, Ingatestone Club, followed by a Dinner and Concert on 28 March at which medals were presented.

Ted Mackay regained his Men's Singles title in the next season but Charlie had some compensation when he won the Mixed Doubles with Marjorie Shipstone. Marjorie became the first player to record a treble when she added the Women's Singles and Doubles to her haul.

The Men's Singles title reverted to Charlie Wheeler in 1949 when he beat Ted Mackay in the Final and the same two players were expected to win the Doubles but were surprisingly beaten by Bill Little and Dick King (Hoffmanns). Marjorie Shipstone took her third successive Women's title and there was a dual success for Elsie Williams (Hoffmann) in the Mixed and Ladies Doubles. In the Mixed event, she was partnered by Dick King, his second title. A new Junior Singles (Under 17) event was held and the first winner was Pat Cross (Hoffmann).

Another new event appeared in 1950/51, the Veterans (Over 40) Singles and it was fitting that the first winner was Ted Mackay, the Finals again being held at the Marconi Girls Pavilion. The number entered for this new event was eleven whilst in other events, there was Men's Singles eighty-two, Women's Singles twenty-four, Mixed Doubles thirty pairs, Men's Doubles forty pairs, Women's Doubles ten pairs and Junior Singles nineteen. The preliminary rounds of all events were held over a period of one month.

The Finals were held earlier than usual, at Christy's on 27 January 1951. No League games were played in December as this month was left free for the early rounds. The system used was that the matches were played by mutual arrangement between the players! The number of entries was much higher than the previous season and so the experiment was judged a success. In the Finals themselves, it was almost a repeat of the previous year, the only significant change being in the Women's Singles won by Elsie Williams, her only success in this event.

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The Finals of 1951/52 season moved to Hoffmanns and Charlie Wheeler, now eligible for the Veterans Singles, duly won the event for the first of an incredible nineteen successes, a record which is most unlikely to be beaten. That year also saw the first Championship win for Tom Mayer (Marconi) in the Men's Doubles and Edna Sitch (ECC) in the Women's Singles.

At the 1953 AGM rule amendments were passed which allowed for separate Men's and Women's Veterans Singles and Boys and Girls Singles. It was also agreed that juniors had to be under 18 years of age on 1 July of the subsequent season. Unfortunately, due to lack of entries, the Women's Veterans Singles was never held and the number of entries in the Men's Veterans Singles was only 6. The first winner of the Junior Girls Singles was Paula Songer (now Cant) who went on to take the title for a further two years. In the Women's Singles, Janet Andrews (formerly Chambers) had the first of four successes.

The entries for the 1955/56 events totalled 345 which was a reduction of 23 on the previous year. The analysis of the entries was Men's Singles 111, Men's Doubles 50 pairs, Women's Singles 29, Women's Doubles 12 pairs, Mixed Doubles 26 pairs, Junior Girls Singles 7, Junior Boys Singles 17, and Veterans Singles 5. These figures confirmed the steady growth over the previous five years. Charlie Wheeler did not defend the Men's title and this enabled Tony Condon (Marconi) after a very hard struggle, to win the first of his seven titles in this event. Marice ('Peter') Searles had her only win in the Women's Singles. For the first time, preliminary rounds of all events were played at one venue, the new Marconi Social Club.

The 1956/57 season saw the introduction of a Mixed Under 15 singles which was won by Mark Sweeting (YMCA Juniors). The cup for this event was presented by Fred Hayman, and it was appropriate that one of his own proteges' should be the first winner. It was another good year for Tony Condon as he became the first man to win the triple. In addition, despite being unseeded, he won the Essex Closed Men's Singles title, the first Chelmsford player since Charlie Wheeler 10 years earlier.

The entries for the Championships were higher than in the previous season and it was reported that Chelmsford was the only League in Essex not to show a considerable diminution of interest.

Unfortunately, in the following year, there was a small reduction but the majority of the loss occurred in the Women's events. Tony Condon again took the Men's title but only after a titanic struggle with Dudley Wright (Maldon). It was reputed to have been one of the finest games seen in the Championships in living memory. In the Ladies events, Peggy Piper (Marconi) had her only success in the Singles and she also won the Doubles with Mary Reynoldson (Marconi).

The highlight of the 1958/59 Championships was the Junior Boys Singles when Mark Sweeting (YMCA Juniors) just got the better of his teammate, Nigel Bates. Mark went on to win this event for 2 further years, and it was mentioned at the time that his feat of a hat-trick of successive victories would probably remain unique in the League's history. As is now known, David Newman was to rewrite the record books some 15 years later.

The 1959 AGM amended the rule for entry into the Championships to compel players to take part in 50% of their Club's fixtures in the League competition up to 31 December if also registered with another league. The fees were also amended to 1/- (5p) per event!

In the 1959/60 Championships, Tommy Caldwell (Marconi) had the first of his six wins in the Men's Singles. There was also the sole success in the Championships for Colin Davidson and Jack Radcliffe (CTTC) who were surprise winners of the Doubles.

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In the following year, Janet Andrews had her fourth and final win in the Women's Singles and she completed a good year by taking the Women's Doubles with Shirley Fell (CTTC) and the Mixed with Tom Mayer. Fresh out of the junior ranks, Mark Sweeting defeated Colin Davidson in the Final of the Men's Singles.

Concern was expressed at the number of entries in the Championships and about the attendance on Finals Night. Interest in the game had been waning nationally but it appeared the malaise had finally reached Chelmsford. Several ideas such as drawing partners in the doubles event were put forward and a number of letters appeared in the local press.

Fortunately, the downturn was only temporary as the 1961/62 Championships proved very successful with increased attendances for the Finals Night, held again at Hoffmans. Pride of place went to Charlie Wheeler who at the age of 50 recaptured the Men's Singles, an event he last won in 1955. The outcome of the event had been open as Tommy Caldwell, the number 1 seed was absent through illness. Mark Sweeting, number 2 seed, was beaten by the unseeded George Gale (Moulsham Lodge) who in turn was defeated in the semi-finals by Alan Clancy (YMCA). Charlie also won the Men's Doubles with Peter Byford which gave him nine successes in Singles and Doubles. Jeff Lucas became only the second player to win both junior events in the same year.

Tommy Caldwell was fit and well for the 1963 events and he went on to complete the triple by regaining the Men's Singles and winning the Men's Doubles with Geoff Newman and the Mixed with Paula Cant.

However, the outstanding performance of those Championships was June Crozier's (nee Wiggins) defeat of Betty Bird, the number 1 seed, defending Champion and England International, in the Final of the Women's Singles. That year also saw the introduction of the Restricted Singles which was initially for players from Division 3 downwards. The event was won by Roy Sleet (Harway) when he defeated John Archer (Crittall) in a tense three-set match.

Tommy Caldwell continued to dominate the Men's events although in the 1964 Championships he lost in the Final of the Men's Doubles with Geoff Newman to an inspired performance from the scratch pairing of Joe Lewington (Moulsham Lodge) and Rod Gregory (Rudisco). Apart from this, there were surprises in the Women's Singles in which the top 4 seeded players were all beaten before the Final. This enabled two Crittall Witham girls Paula Cant and Joan Pedder (now King) to meet at the last hurdle, the former coming out on top for her only success in the event.

The 1965 Championship saw the temporary end of Tommy Caldwell's domination when Tony Condon, now playing for Rosebery, returned to the local scene and comfortably beat the defending Champion in the Final of the Singles. So on top was Condon that he was able to play a few 'exhibition' shots much to the delight of the large crowd. The Women's Singles again went contrary to the form book when the top seeds, Joy Caldwell and Pat Condon lost in the early rounds. June Crozier took full advantage to recapture the title beating Shirley Carroll (Hoffmann) in a closely fought 3 set match. In the Junior events, David Hodson regained his Junior Boys title but disappointingly there was no Junior Girls event due to a lack of entries.

Charlie Wheeler took the Veterans title for the 14th consecutive year but his superb run came to an end in 1967. In the Final he met Peter Faulder(CTTC) and with the latter attacking well, Wheeler lost the first set 21-14. In the second he found himself 15-5 down and although he rallied slightly he eventually lost 21-10. Tommy Caldwell regained the Men's Singles whilst June Crozier annexed what had now become the Ladies' title for the third successive year. For the last time, the Finals were held at Hoffmanns for from 1968 they were played at the Marconi Social Club in Beehive

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Lane. The early rounds were still played over a three to four week period in December and January and the entry was still only 1/-(5p) per event.

Tommy Caldwell was to win the Men's title for 2 further years but in 1970 he was beaten by teammate Mike Watts. Shirley Carroll (Hoffmann) won the Ladies Singles in 1968 and 1969 but was then beaten by June Crozier in the 1970 semi-finals. June went on to win the title for a fifth time when she defeated Jean Wadling. The same Finals saw Charlie Wheeler beaten for a second time in the Veterans by Peter Faulder.

1970 also saw the introduction of an Under 17 Doubles, Under 21 Singles, and Under 13 Singles. Adrian Smart (Crittall) and Brian Topham (YMCA) were the first Doubles winners whilst Mikel Dvorak (Rosebery) won the Under 21 Singles. The winner of the Under 13 Singles was Steve Newman (Maldon) who had beaten brother David in the Final. Despite being only 10, David made up for this loss by winning the Under 15 Singles. The Newman era was about to begin.

Lesley Pates (Rosebery) also retained her Junior Girls Singles title, defeating sister Susan in the Final. It was remarkable that brothers and sisters should contest 2 finals in the same year.

There was a major change in the format of the Championships in 1971 when the senior events were all held on one day, a Saturday, at the Great Baddow Comprehensive School. Not only did this do away with the problems of organising different premises for the preliminary rounds, but it meant that League matches could start later in September which was well received. The Junior events had already been held, also on one day, at RHP earlier in the season. Tables were hired for the senior events, and it was arranged with the Essex Schools Table Tennis Association, that they would hold their annual tournament on the Sunday to share the costs.

Mark Sweeting was crowned Men's Singles Champion for the second time and Joy Caldwell won the Ladies Singles, strangely her only success in this event. However, the most impressive performances came from David Newman in the junior events. He won all the singles titles and the doubles in combination with Michael Morris (Maldon YC). His brother Steve was losing finalist in three of the four events.

In 1972, the first Chelmsford Open Tournament was held on the Saturday which enabled the senior events to be held on Sunday 6 February, again at Great Baddow. Despite using RHP for two evenings during the week, it was still difficult to have all matches completed by the Sunday evening.

The outstanding match of the Championships was between Steven Whiteley (Maldon) and Mikel Dvorak (Rosebery), the defending champion, in the Final of the Under 21 Singles. Steven just edged it after a tense and exciting match which, as with all the Finals, was watched by a sparse crowd; matches taking place on the Sunday evening when most people had seen or played enough table tennis for one day. In the other events, Tony Condon won the Men's Singles for the last time whilst Jean Wadling recorded Danbury's first Ladies Singles win. The junior events were again held at RHP but this time it was the Bawden family who came out on top with Andy winning the Under 15 Singles and Martin the Junior Boys Singles and Junior Doubles.

The second Chelmsford Open was held in 1973, and the same format for the Closed Championships was followed. Again it was very successful with over 200 entries which included 149 in the Men's Singles. With Tony Condon not competing, it was expected to be a very open event and onlookers were not disappointed as many seeds fell in the early rounds. In the Final, 15-year-old Andy Bawden triumphed over Steven Whiteley.

The only disappointing feature was the very low number of entries in the Ladies events, although this should not detract from Jean Wadling's performance in retaining her Singles title. David

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Newman won his first senior championship when he partnered Sue Beckwith to victory in the Mixed Doubles. The start of one era coincided with the end of another, with Charlie Wheeler winning the Veterans title for the nineteenth, and last, time.

Later, in March, David Newman was to win all the Junior Singles events, and the Under 17 doubles with Kevin Owers (Danbury). On the same day, Pauline Ritchings (Nalگو) had a surprise win over Sue Pates in the Junior Girls Singles.

There was another major change to the Tournament for 1974 with a complete weekend at the Mid Essex Technical College being given over to holding the preliminary rounds of the senior events. This reflected the growing entry list, and by popular request, a separate Finals Night was reintroduced, held at the Marconi Social Club in Beehive Lane.

Tony Condon was again absent from the Men's Singles and Steven Whiteley took full advantage to win the title for the first time. Joe Lewington (Moulsham Lodge) also had a first success in the Veterans Singles, an event he has won eight times. With the expansion of the League, it was felt that players in the lower divisions should have another event that they could enter, in addition to the Restricted Singles which by now was for players from Division 4 and below, and so the 7 Down Singles was introduced. This new event was won by Egbert Thomas (METC) who went on to complete a unique double by winning the Restricted Singles. In the Men's event, the same player put out Stephen Greep, then playing a prominent part in Maldon B's success in Division 1.

The Junior events, due to problems in finding suitable premises, were held over until September and eventually played at Dovedale. The Newman brothers again dominated but in the Under 13 Singles Terry Dowsett won his first title, and sister Julie picked up the Junior Girls Singles at the age of 10.

The 1975 Championships were again held at Mid Essex Technical College and a new Ladies Singles champion was crowned. Linda Barrow had the first of her 3 consecutive wins and in two of those years, she completed a treble. However, with hindsight, the most significant result was Steven Whiteley's win over David Newman in the Men's Singles Final, the last time the latter would be beaten in the Singles for 10 years.

David was to dominate the Championships from that day onwards, his successes have overshadowed the achievements of another fine ambassador for the League, Julie Vansertima(Dowsett). Julie won the first of her Ladies Singles titles in 1978 and she has now had a record 6 wins in the event.

There have also been some other outstanding achievements in recent years, none more so than by Mark Sweeting. In 1984 he won the Veterans Singles at his first attempt, and so became the only player to win titles at Junior, Senior and Veterans level. There have also been good performances from Terry Dowsett, Peter Hayden, Chris Knight, Robin Lang, Lisa Hayden, and Steve Tilson, and Stephen Hibbitt became the second player to win the Under 13 and Under 15 singles in the same year.

Since 1974, the Championships have been held at the Chelmer Institute in Park Road, Chelmsford (formerly Mid Essex Technical College) and the League is fortunate to enjoy such excellent facilities in a central location. For access to the Institute, the League is indebted to Ken Pearce for his continuing interest in the sport.

The record number of individual entries to date is 234 which was achieved in 1981/82, although this figure was nearly equalled in 1984 when there were 233 entries. Over 700 games are played during the weekend which includes the preliminary rounds of all events. It is a very busy time for

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the Competitions Secretary and the Committee, especially from lunchtime Friday until late Sunday on the weekend of the Championships. In addition, there is Finals Night which, from 1977/78, has been held at the Old Chelmsfordians Club.

Finals Night has always been well attended and it is a reflection of the high standard of the League that so many exciting games have taken place.

The League Championships received a boost when sponsorship from the National Westminster Bank was obtained in 1983/84, which enabled the Championships to be maintained despite fast-rising costs, especially in the hire of the hall. The sponsorship has also meant that tables, nets, surrounds, etc. can be hired, which has removed the burden of borrowing equipment from local clubs. It is easy to forget that up to the 1979/80 Championships, the tables and nets were collected from various club premises on Friday and returned on Sunday. Invariably, being early February, the weather was poor and after a hectic weekend, the physical effort of carrying tables was the 'final straw'.

However, even though these improvements have eased the workload, there is still a considerable amount to be done in preparing the Championship and the claim that they are the largest local league event in England has never been challenged. For many years, other leagues have looked with envy at the Chelmsford Championships, in terms of size and professionalism - long may it continue to be so!

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7. INTER LEAGUE

Competition between table tennis leagues has always been a feature of the game and records show that Chelmsford played their first friendly inter league game against West Essex at the Chelmsford YMCA on 6 December 1935. Five-man teams competed with Chelmsford running out winners 13-12, each game consisting of only one set to 21 points and every player playing each other. The return fixture at Epping was held on 31 January 1936, and Chelmsford lost 11-14.

The formation of the Essex County Table Tennis Association on 13 July 1938 brought into being the opportunity for an organised Inter League Competition within the County and it was proposed to have separate Men's and Women's competitions. The untimely intervention of the Second World War saw a postponement of these competitions until the re-formation of the County Association on 31 August 1946. At this time, five leagues were members of the Association, each paying affiliation fees of £1.05, Chelmsford being joined by Colchester, Ilford, Romford, and Southend; Dagenham joined shortly after.

No formal League competition was held this first year but eventually, the 1947 season saw Chelmsford, East London, Ilford, Romford, and Southend compete in one division of mixed teams comprising three men and two ladies - Colchester were unable to participate because of petrol shortages! The end of the season found East London champions with a 100% record, and Chelmsford won one match. The 1949 season saw a proposal to introduce separate Men's and Women's competitions but this, unfortunately, did not materialise, although the following season saw two divisions formed and a separate junior competition introduced.

The 1953-54 season saw the introduction of a veterans competition and first honours to Chelmsford in winning the division two (east) title. Two years later Chelmsford went one better, winning the overall division two title with promotion to the Premier Division and chalking up their first victory in the Veterans Division (east), although East London and the other Metropolitan leagues still dominated the competitions. By 1958 the Chelmsford Junior team was starting to make an impression, finishing runners up to Romford, and the following year winning a play-off against East London for the title. The Veterans team still found little challenge to their supremacy in the East Division, winning it for the fourth successive year, but they were unable to make any impression in the playoffs.

By 1960 twenty-one leagues were competing within the County, reaching a high of twenty-three leagues during the latter part of the decade, with Ilford and Romford still dominating the inter league championships. By the mid-sixties, Barking and Dagenham started to make their mark, with perhaps only Southend regularly challenging the Metropolitan Essex leagues with any confidence.

Minutes of the County Annual General Meeting in May 1968 record that the Chelmsford representative requested consideration be given to the running of a Ladies competition by 1970 and this was agreed, although, for reasons which are not clear, it took until 1977-78 before the separate Men's, Ladies and Mixed competitions were staged. Honours until then had been few and far between for the Chelmsford teams but following the revamping of the inter league competition, the Men's, Ladies, Mixed, and Veterans teams all made their marks. The Men's A team finished twice as runners up in the First Division with the Men's B team winning the Division 4 title in 1982/83. The Veterans too chalked up some notable victories with special mention of the C team winning the Division six and five titles in consecutive seasons 1980/81/82. However, pride of place must go to the Mixed and Ladies teams. The Ladies won the Division One title twice, in the first season the competition was held and again two years later in 1979/80. The Mixed team doubled that tally with four First Division titles, three consecutively in 1977/78/79/80 and then again in 1981/82.

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Nationally four-team knock out competitions for leagues are run, these being the Wilmot Cup for Men, the J M Rose Bowl for Ladies, the Carter Cup for Boys, and the Bromfield Trophy for Girls. Chelmsford first entered the Wilmot Cup in 1963/64 losing in the zone final to Woolwich. It was ten years before that stage of the competition was reached again, this time East London were the victors, as they were on nearly every occasion that the teams met. Twice since then, the team have reached the zone final losing in 1976/77 to Dagenham and 1980/81 to Cheshunt. Season 1967/68 saw the Boys in action for the first time but success eluded them for some time until in 1976 they reached the last eight of the competition going out to the eventual runners up, Bournemouth.

The Ladies first entered the fray in 1968/69 with varied success, culminating in losing in the quarter-final to Eastbourne.

The Bromfield Trophy competition is where, perhaps, Chelmsford has shown the greatest return. It took nine years from the first entry in 1969/70 to reach the zone final, but the following year they reached the semi-final before being defeated by a team from North Middlesex made up of England International players. This same league was victorious again two years later when the Chelmsford girls reached the quarter-final.

Over many years, one aspect of the representation at inter league level has been the overall excellent behaviour of those playing for Chelmsford. Whilst there have been isolated incidents which are regretted by all concerned, Chelmsford can be proud of the record of its ambassadors.

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8. THE TROPHIES

Every competition held ultimately produces a winner, be it team or individual, on League or Knock Out basis, and each winner receives a token or trophy as a reward. The financial rewards available to today's professional competitors tend to overshadow the actual trophies won but to the vast majority of amateur competitors in sport to have competed is enough reward in itself; the trophy awarded to the winner being symbolic of the spirit of all the entrants.

The League have 32 trophies which in one form or another are competed for or awarded during each season. In the first days of the League though, only three trophies were needed. The Gordon Cup for League Division 1, the F G Burrell Cup for League Division 2, and the Pope and Smith Cup for the Men's Individual Knock Out competition. Time has unfortunately veiled the history of some of the donors, although of course the sports firm of Pope and Smith are well known in the area. Mr Burrell was a well known local figure, being principal of Leonard Gray & Co, Solicitors in Duke Street, and he was the benefactor of a number of sports in which he took an interest. All three competitions have been run each year, apart from 1939-45, and are just as keenly contested now as when newly presented 50 years ago.

The three years leading up to the outbreak of the War saw the presentation of 5 further trophies to the League, four of which are still competed for in the same event. The Chelmer Cup for the Ladies Individual Knock Out competition was presented in 1936 and in the same year, the League purchased a shield for the Men's Team Knock Out competition; due to wear and tear a replacement trophy was bought by the League in 1954.

Alderman Christy was President from 1937-38 and to mark his appointment he presented the Christy Cup in 1937 for the Ladies Division 1. This competition ceased in 1961 and after 10 years in mothballs, the cup was competed for in the period 1971 - 1973 for Division 7B. The A and B Divisional set up was scrapped in 1973 and the Divisions extended to 10 and since that time the trophy has been given to the Division 10 winners.

Alderman A H Thompson was both President of the League and Mayor of Chelmsford in 1938 and donated a trophy to the League in that year for the Ladies Team Knock Out competition held to this day. The final trophy presented before the War was the George King Cup for Division 3. Mr. King was the founder Secretary and Treasurer of the League, a position he retained until the outbreak of hostilities.

The restart of competitions was in 1945 and in 1947 the Mayor, Alderman Andrews, presented a trophy for the Men's Doubles Knock Out competition. In that same season Committee member Mr H A Hart presented the Hart Cup for a Youth League competition and this was transferred to the Individual Junior Boys Knock Out in 1949.

Mr S R A Precious was a Committee member from 1939 to 1953. He was the immediate post-war Secretary/Treasurer until 1949 and Chairman from then until 1953. The Ladies Doubles Knock Out competition had been held since 1938 but no permanent trophy had been presented and so in 1949, Mr Precious donated a cup for this event.

The Festival of Britain in 1951 was also marked by the presentation of 3 further trophies to the League and the appropriately named 1951 Festival Cup was purchased by the League for Division 4. Mr E W J Mackay was a Committee member from 1946 - 1954 and a Vice President of the League until his death in 1984. He presented the Mackay Cup for the Mixed Doubles Knock Out competition. Like Mr Mackay, Mr F D Thurgood was a Committee member from 1945 - 1954 and was Chairman from 1948 - 1950. He too presented a trophy in 1951 the Thurgood Cup, and this

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was for the Veterans Individual Knock Out competition, won co-incidentally for the first two years by Mr (Ted) Mackay.

The 1950s saw an average of one new trophy being presented every year to the League and following the 1951 Festival, 1952 saw the Eileen Ainsworth Cup for Ladies Division 2 being donated. Miss Ainsworth, as well as being a Committee member from 1946 - 1954 was also General Secretary from 1948 - 1950, and following her marriage, the trophy was named the Eileen Hance Cup and competed for in Division 6 from 1963 onwards, the Ladies separate competitions having ceased by then. Ladies Singles winner from 1946 - 1949, Miss Marjorie Shipstone, was also a Committee member from 1953 - 1961 and in 1954 she presented the Shipstone Cup for the Junior Girls Individual Knock Out competition.

Mr Fred Hayman served as a Committee member for several years between 1949 and 1959 and in 1956 presented the Hayman Cup for an Under 15 Boys Individual Knock Out competition. He presented a new trophy in 1966 and at that time the event was widened to include girls. 1956 also saw the donation of the E W Brewer Cup for Division 5 by Mr Brewer who was a Vice President and enthusiastic supporter of the League.

The Mayor of Chelmsford in 1958 was also President and his wife presented the Helen Woods Cup for a Mixed Team Knock Out competition and the following year Alderman Langton similarly holding both offices of Mayor and President, presented the Langton Cup for a Men's Individual Consolation event. 1973 saw the end of that competition and the introduction of a new 7 Down Individual Knock Out competition and the cup was reallocated to that event. The 1950s were seen out by the presentation by the Marconi Company of their Decade Cup to the League. The trophy was originally for an internal table tennis competition within the Marconi Company, to mark the 10 successive First Division wins by the table tennis section, but following its presentation in 1959 the League introduced a new random selection doubles Knock Out competition held one evening each season and competed for during the following 15 years; the cup is now held by the League.

Mrs Janet Andrews, who held the Ladies Singles, Doubles, and Mixed Doubles titles for 1958 to 1961 presented a cup in 1963 for an Individual Knock Out competition restricted to those players registered in Division 4 and below. perhaps the most fiercely competitive event in the Championships reflected in the 21 different winners over 23 years. Also in 1963, Vice President and Committee member Mr D E Kimmince presented the Kimmince Cup for a Team Knock Out competition similarly restricted to those teams participating in Division 4 and below. 2 years later saw the presentation of the Crusader Cup for Division 7. In 1969 2 further trophies were donated, the Edmund Wilkes Cup for an Under 17 Doubles Knock Out competition and the Grace Levett Cup for an Under 21 Individual Knock Out competition. Mr Wilkes was Mayor, and President, in 1969 and Mrs Levett was a Committee member from 1965 - 1970, and Secretary from 1965 - 1967.

Four trophies appeared during the 1970's the first in 1970 being the Tom Mayer Cup for an Under 13 Individual Knock Out competition. Mr Mayer served on the Committee from 1952 - 1965 being Chairman from 1959 onwards. He donated the trophy on being elected President in 1970, a post he held for 12 years. Reg Sleet retired from the Committee in 1971 after 16 years and he presented a trophy for Division 6B which was transferred to Division 9 in 1973. In that year Pat Dukes presented a trophy for Division 8. He had served on the Committee from 1956 - 1961. being Secretary from 1958 - 1961. He was elected Chairman in 1967 and donated the trophy on his retirement. Subsequently, he became President from 1982 - 1984.

Ten years ago one of the better-known clubs, Rosebery, left the League and jointly with the local sports and toy retailers Pope and Smith, a Rosebowl was presented to be awarded annually by a

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Board of Trustees to any member of the League in recognition of services to the League during the season.

Following the death of Charlie Wheeler in 1982 his family, in conjunction with the League inaugurated an annual award to the most promising junior player appearing in the Individual Championships. The most recent trophy presented appeared in 1984 when Ray Clements, a long-standing League member gave a cup for the newly created Team Handicap Knock Out competition.

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9. THE TOURS

Five times representatives of the Chelmsford League went 'on tour', twice to Holland and once each to Devon, Norfolk, and Wales.

Inevitably it was the Dutch visits that caught the imagination, although apart from the Norfolk weekend, Holland was geographically the closest area toured!

It was in May 1956, during what was then known as the Whitsun Holiday, that 16 players and officials from the League left England for Holland and the Rayon Club of Ede.

The party assembled at Chelmsford Station on the Friday for the overnight journey to Holland. Arrival in Ede was at 9.00 the following morning and after some sightseeing, it was time for the first match. A large crowd witnessed the game, amongst whom was the Burgomaster of Ede who was handed a message from the Mayor of Chelmsford, Cllr C Verdult, himself of Dutch origin. The match itself was played on two tables, four men and two women in each team, and the visitors ran out easy 18-2 winners.

On Sunday, and Monday morning, there was the opportunity for more sightseeing and reports are that the social events of the Sunday evening were a great success.

On Monday afternoon an individual tournament was held in which Charlie Wheeler lost in the Final of the Men's Singles to the Dutch International J Scheffer. Edna Sitch beat compatriot Marjorie Shipstone and in the Mixed Doubles Scheffer and Miss Sitch were successful over G Luchhart and Paula Songer.

Tired but happy, the party arrived back in Chelmsford on Tuesday morning, with a reciprocal message for the Mayor. League Secretary Percy MacDonald contacted the Borough Council in anticipation that he would simply send the message to the Council offices. He was totally unprepared for the invitation to formally present, and read, the message to the Mayor in front of the full Borough Council!

The second visit to Holland in 1969, was the fifth and final tour. Once again Easter was the chosen date but a new club acted as hosts, TSF Schiedam, one of Rotterdam's leading clubs. The usual pattern of team events followed by an individual championship and the star of the show was undoubtedly Stuart Gibbs, the former England International who was then playing for Maldon Wanderers. It was just as well for Chelmsford that Gibbs was in such fine form, for in the second round of team matches the Dutch had invited three of the top six in their National ranking list to play for them. All had represented Holland, and that the Chelmsford team lost 6-4 indicates the strength of the Chelmsford League at that time. In the earlier round of matches, the Men's A team (Gibbs, Tommy Caldwell, and Julien Levett) had won 7-3 whilst the B team (Steve Conquest, George Gale, and Terry Eaton) were held to a draw. The juniors (Brian Topham, Steven Williams, and Steve Siggs) went down 6-4, a result reversed by the ladies (Joy Caldwell, Jean Gale, and Muriel Buck). Against entirely different opposition, the B team again drew, the Juniors lost 7-3 and the Ladies 8-2. To complete the team events, the officials from each country played and this match ended 15-2 in favour of Chelmsford.

Such was the interest in Chelmsford's visit that Dutch radio carried interviews with the away team and broadcast the results of matches. In fact, the Men's Singles final between Gibbs and Nico van Slobbe (Dutch number 2) was played early so that the result could be included in the 6.30 sports news. And bad news it was for the Dutch because Gibbs maintained his unbeaten run to crown a fine weekend. Chelmsford also enjoyed success in the Men's Doubles, the winners

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being Gibbs and Caldwell, and in the Mixed Doubles, Gibbs, and Joy Caldwell. Joy and Muriel Buck lost in the Ladies Doubles final, but in the singles event, only Mrs Buck reached the quarter-finals.

Table Tennis, of course, took up the minority of the time, visits to Amsterdam with a canal boat ride, to the Flower Gardens at Kerkenhoff and Muradam Model Village enabled the party to see some of the Dutch tourist attractions, whilst evenings were spent enjoying Dutch hospitality.

In between these Continental excursions were three domestic tours, the first to Devon in 1962. Easter was the chosen date, and late Thursday the party departed for an overnight drive to Plymouth. In pre-motorway days this was an arduous journey and the results of Friday's matches reflected the tiredness of the Chelmsford contingent. The Men's A team (Tommy Caldwell, Charlie Wheeler and Walter Fell) and the Ladies (June Wiggins, Joy Seabrook, and Shelia Orrin) both lost 9-1 whilst the B team (Barry Seabrook, Reg Sleet, and Doug Kimmince) failed to disturb the scorers. Sightseeing in Exeter was combined with a match against the local league, played with one mixed team and it was defeat by the unusual score of 8-3. After a better night's sleep, the visitors provided tougher opposition for Plymouth, the Mens A team (as before plus Geoff Newman) won 16-8, the B team 9-6, the Ladies (as before plus Marjorie Wake) lost 11-5 and a mixed team lost 7-4. To round off the weekend, the team called in at Torbay Chalet Camp on the way home for an encounter with the South Devon and Torbay League, the result being 6-4 in favour of the visitors.

In 1963 a venue much closer home was sought, and the flat fields of Norfolk lured Chelmsford. Although travelling on Friday, it was not until Saturday afternoon that the matches started. The Junior team (Julien Levett, Jeff Lucas, Maurice Lakin and Terry Eaton) lost to Norwich 7-3, a result that was avenged when the seniors (Charlie Wheeler, Tommy Caldwell, Charlie Carroll, Joy Seabrook and June Wiggins) took on what was almost the Norfolk County team. However, the senior B team (Levett, Geoff Newman, Rod Gregory, Sheila Orrin and Shirley Carroll) were well beaten 8-2 by Norwich B. Sunday and it was off to the sea to take on Great Yarmouth. The seniors A team were held to a draw whilst the B team won 7-3. After the marathon matches in the West Country, this was a more relaxed visit, only two series of matches being played on the normal four a side scoring system.

The last non-overseas tour was almost abroad - Newport, Wales playing host to Chelmsford at Easter 1964. The Eastern Valleys League provided the first opposition. The A team (Tommy Caldwell, Charlie Carroll, Charlie Wheeler, Joy Caldwell and Shirley Carroll) were easy winners 11-1, the Juniors (Julien Levett, Jeff Lucas, Terry Eaton and Maurice Lakin) won even more easily 10-0, only the second team (Barry Seabrook, Graham Taplin, Reg Sleet, Shelia Orrin and Marjorie Wake) going down by 7-5. On the same evening Newport provided stiffer opposition, all three teams losing by 7-5, 7-5 and 7-3. However, it has to be said in defence of the juniors that they had played the Monmouthshire County team. Sunday found Chelmsford up against the champions of Wales, Cardiff. The first team were beaten, but not disgraced, 8-4 by a quintet of Welsh Internationals, and the 2nd team also had to combat two Internationals in their match and not surprisingly lost 11-1. The Juniors lost too, by 8-4, but were up against players who were later to represent Wales at Senior level. Not on the face of it a successful weekend, but given the strength of the opposition, who can doubt that the Essex players benefitted from the experience?

Since 1969, various ideas for tours have been put forward, but partly through changed social circumstances, and the surfeit of table tennis for the top players, it has proved difficult to find a time of the year when other commitments do not exist.

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10. TOM ARCHER

Tom Archer's name does not feature on any of the League's individual trophies but in many ways he holds perhaps the most remarkable record of any of the players playing today.

Tom played in the League in the inaugural year of 1935 and has played every season since that time. It says much for the modesty of the man that this only came to light when the League's records were being researched and it was noticed that he was Secretary of Chelmsford RDC (Nalgo) Club in the 1937/38 season.

Tom is now aged 71 and is the League's oldest registered player. He began by playing for Nalgo (Mid Essex) but their name was changed to Chelmsford RDC (Nalgo) for the second season. In the 1937/38 season he had his first success when his team won Division 2. The other members of that winning team were Maurice Butcher (who was playing until quite recently), Dickie Sparrow, Dick Brooks and Cyril Meadows. Tom continued to play for the RDC until the War which caused the temporary suspension of the League's activities.

On his return to Chelmsford after the War, Tom joined Great Baddow where he played with Stan Precious who was then League Secretary, later to become Chairman.

Tom later joined Rudisco and he had immediate success when he was a member of their B team who won Division 4 in the 1955/56 season. Nine years later he was to repeat the feat when Rudisco B again won that Division.

Upon the demise of Rudisco following the 1971/72 season he had a spell with Essex Chronicle before joining Baddow Village when the Club was formed in 1973. He still plays for Baddow and is a member of their Division 7 side.

It is interesting to hear Tom reminisce about the many outstanding local players he has played against and the different styles of play over the 50 years. He can clearly recall the unusual spin service of Roger Merrifield, the first winner of the Men's Singles, as well as the defensive qualities of Charlie Wheeler and the forehand of Ted Mackay. He compares these with the modern style of the present-day players such as David Newman and the "Gower Girls", and still he enjoys the game.

Now retired, Tom enjoys dancing as well as table tennis and let us hope we will see this 'real gentleman of the sport' dancing round the table for many years to come.

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11. PAULA CANT

Paula Cant hit the headlines some thirty years ago when, as the young Paula Songer, she won a national knock out tournament organised by the Daily Mirror. A glittering future in table tennis seemed to be beckoning but although she won numerous honours at County level, she never progressed to an England spot for which she was tipped.

Instead, she concentrated on her family life and confining her talents to the domestic scene as far as table tennis was concerned. So much so that she was mentioned as a stalwart of the League in the Management Committee minutes when turning in a match winning performance for Crittalls in the final of the 1972 Ladies Team Knock Out. And so she was, but if she was a stalwart then, what is she now, some 15 years further on and still playing week in week out, and competing as keenly as ever in the Individual Championships.

The addition of titles to the Cant cupboard has diminished in recent years, but Paula's name looms large in the League honours. The inaugural winner of the Junior Girls Singles in season 1953-54, she retained that title for the next two years. Strangely, Paula only once got her name on the Ladies Singles title, but the Doubles is a completely different story. Five times Ladies Doubles champion, twice with Betty Bird and three times with Muriel Buck(Chambers) who is now a teammate of Paula's at Danbury.

A look down the Mixed Doubles list shows wins in the mid Sixties in partnership with Tommy Caldwell and then a long break of eleven years before teaming up with Steve Whitely to get the better of an emerging young partnership of Dave Newman and Linda Barrow, her last title at this level.

Paula is a player who has only ever been in the news for the right reasons, and this will come as no surprise to her many friends in, and out, of table tennis for above all else, Paula is an unassuming and charming person whom it is a pleasure to know.

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12. JULIE VANSERTIMA (now JOHNSON)

A glance through the League honours will find the name Julie Vansertima appearing infrequently; in fact not until the 1985/86 season. However, those who know that the maiden name of Mrs Vansertima was Dowsett will not be surprised to find Julie amongst the players selected for their outstanding contribution to the League.

Julie started her career 14 years ago at the age of 9, her introduction to the sport being through her father and she learnt her table tennis alongside brother Terry. Julie recalls the help she and Terry received from Tony Condon and she speaks highly of the tremendous benefits both enjoyed from regular practice with the late Charlie Wheeler.

It was not long before the young Julie appeared in League matches, and very soon tournament successes were coming her way with victory in the Junior Girls Singles at the age of 10, a title she retained throughout her junior days. It is tempting fate to suggest that the feat will never be equalled but few would deny that it is a magnificent record. In addition, Julie also became the first girl to win the Mixed Under 13 and Under 15 Singles, and to date, the only girl to have two Under 17 doubles trophies. Of course, Julie did not confine her talents to Chelmsford, and picked up the Junior Girls title four times in Braintree and once in Southend.

On the County scene, Julie made her mark when she won the Junior Girls Singles in 1978, in the face of stiff competition from long-time rivals Helen Gore and Yvette Brown. Julie also collected the Cadet Singles at County level, but in her last year as a junior she transferred to Suffolk following a dispute not of her making with Essex. She was unfairly blamed for the County being relegated from the Junior Premier Division by not being available for the second set of matches (not being selected for the first set three months earlier) having given a prior commitment to play elsewhere; a commitment she felt bound to honour.

There is little doubt that Essex's loss was Suffolk's gain for Julie was ranked number 1 lady straightaway, a position she retains to this day. As a result of her County Championship performances for Suffolk - she is rarely beaten - plus a good run in the Sussex Open, she reached number 41 in the England ranking list, a position that would surely have been enhanced had she chosen to play the tournament circuit. Not surprisingly, the Suffolk number 1 lady won the Ladies Singles for 3 years.

Although not enjoying success as a junior at open tournaments, at the English Schools events, Julie shone. For five successive years she represented England in International competitions and it was in 1979 that Julie had the highlight of her career, winning the Under 16 Singles at the International event in which seven countries, including the powerful West Germans and French, participated. In contrast, the year before she was selected as first reserve for the World School Championships in Turkey, and felt great disappointment at not going to the Orient.

Back on the domestic scene, in 1985 Julie set a new record with six Ladies Singles wins, now increased to seven, to add to six Ladies Doubles and one Mixed Doubles titles.

Although having a full-time job, Julie intends to continue playing, and has been proud to represent Chelmsford. In 1985, she was the leading member of the Ladies team who won the Essex League but even though there was pleasure in winning, she feels that the enjoyment of playing in a friendly team gave more satisfaction.

To those who have been around for the last 15 years or so, it seems that Julie is something of a 'veteran' locally, and indeed it might be easy to forget that she is still in her early twenties.

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Most young players have the occasional upsets during their early days, and Julie was no exception, but in recent years her play has been characterised by a heavy topspin forehand, a consistent backhand, and an engaging sense of humour.

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13. JACK LAMBDEN

Jack Lambden's name has never hit the headlines and it does not appear in the League honours list, so why has he been included in the section of the League's history. He earns his place because he epitomises the 'bread and butter' players, who over the years, just as much as the stars, have made the League what it is today.

Jack started playing for Hoffmanns in the early Fifties, in the days when that club was not only one of the leading lights in the playing scene but was also providing outstanding administrators. Jack was to remain with Hoffmanns, latterly as Secretary, the last link with the halcyon days, when they folded in 1982 because of difficulties in finding suitable premises. Although his club had disappeared, fortunately Jack did not, and he continued playing by joining the College of Further Education - a very mature student!

Jack can truly be described as a stalwart of the League in every sense. He still regularly turns out in the Individual Championships even though, to put it in his own words, "it is only to play one and umpire one as usual". Jack does himself something of a disservice by that remark because he has won the occasional game, and the occasional medal. These successes have usually been confined to hard bat tournaments, a weapon with which he normally plays in any event.

Jack's interests do not stop at table tennis. He is an expert ballroom dancer - a fact that is given away by his nifty footwork around the table. Indeed, his soft shoe shuffle has been known to baffle opponents and, on occasions, himself. More surprisingly, he is also a licensed pilot and regularly takes to the air, although he would be the first to admit that he is not everyone's idea of a latter-day Captain Biggles.

Few players reach the Newman, Sweeting, Wheeler standard and Jack Lambden is not one who has, but could anyone argue that his contribution, and that of hundreds like him, has been of any less value to the League.

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14. DAVID NEWMAN

There cannot be many players for whom the highlight of their table tennis career occurred at the age of thirteen. And in the case of David Newman this is even more surprising, taking account of the phenomenal success he has enjoyed since.

The event which remains so vividly in David's mind was his international debut, playing for England against France in Paris. Regrettably, this was his only ETTA international appearance, but he enjoyed considerable success in the Schools International Tournaments, winning titles at both Under 16 and Under 19 age groups, as well as Nationally at the same levels.

As a junior, David quickly got into the winning habit, the Chelmsford League Under 13 title an incredible three times, the Under 15 title five times, and the Junior Boys Singles six times. In addition, he was one of the winning pair in the Junior Doubles on five occasions - 19 titles in one League before the age of 18.

A record to be proud of, but it would be wrong to think these successes were achieved without much hard work and sacrifice, by both David and his parents. School holidays were spent at various training camps up and down the country - home was a place to visit every now and then to dispose of the washing and pick up some more kit!

In addition to the local trophies, David was voted Butlins Boy of the Year when just 14, having been in the top three for the previous two years.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, David enjoyed training camps, playing all day and relaxing with friends in the evening. Perhaps this explains why, for all his individual achievements, his best wins have often been in team events. He has had many prominent scalps whilst playing for Essex and in the National League. Winners medals with Dagenham in the Wilmot Cup adorn the Newman trophy cabinet, and the 'computer points' from these events have kept him in the England top 50 even though he does not play the tournament circuit.

His highest ranking as a senior was 15 at a time when every weekend was spent playing, whilst as a junior he was in the top 20 from the age of 13, reaching number four at one stage.

Three Men's Singles wins in the Essex Closed have given David much satisfaction, none more so than the first in 1981 when he had been written off. To prove it was no fluke, he retained the title a year later, and won the trophy again in 1985.

As well as Chelmsford, David still plays in the Dagenham League, and has picked up all the individual titles there.

But back to Chelmsford, where undoubtedly his greatest achievement is ten successive wins in the Men's Singles. For many players that would be enough, but for someone so proud of his Chelmsford representation, not so - anyone who believes he will relinquish the title without a fight needs to think again. Add to this wins in the Men's and Mixed Doubles and Under 21 Singles and his total senior titles becomes 36, easily the most successful player in the League's history, and still to reach his 27th birthday.

David also holds another unique record, being the only 'non administrator' to date to receive the Rosebery Pope and Smith Award for services to table tennis in Chelmsford. In addition, he was the first recipient of the Harry Walker Memorial Trophy, as players player of the year, instituted by

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the County Table Tennis Association to commemorate a long serving official, and voted upon by all playing members of the County.

David has of course been instrumental in the many successes of his only Club, Maldon Wanderers, and in the past eight seasons, has lost just twice, both times in 1984/85 to Peter Hayden.

So how did David get started? Most would expect that with father Geoff a qualified coach and prominent player, it would have been parental influence, but not so. One Saturday the young Newman was due to play football for his school, but the match was called off. Instead, he went with his father, who was helping with a Chelmsford League coaching session at Great Baddow. Sitting watching, but too young and small to take part, David was invited to try his hand by one of the other coaches, Florence Birkbeck, and quickly demonstrated that now famous forehand. This led to an interest in playing and at the tender age of nine he took part in his first League match.

Looking back, one wonders whether a rare talent might have been lost but for the chance cancellation of a football match. Undoubtedly the Chelmsford League would have been poorer without the participation of this personable young man.

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15. MARK SWEETING

On 3rd February 1984, Mark Sweeting became the first player to win Singles titles at all three major age levels, Junior Boys, Men's and Veterans Singles, a far cry from January 1956 when, according to a report in the Essex Weekly News "Lions B groomed another 'cub' into competitive play Mark Sweeting, who is only 13, made an impressive debut".

Lions were the forerunners of the YMCA Juniors and at both Fred Hayman was the driving force in Mark's progress. And driving force he had to be for Mark freely admits to being less than dedicated to winning, a trait which caused him to achieve less as a Junior than his undoubted talents deserved.

Mind you, most youngsters would be more than happy to have enjoyed the success of young Sweeting - Junior Boys Singles winner at the age of 15, a title held for three years, Under 15 Singles winner for two years, ranked 3 in Essex whilst only 15 and number 2 for the next two seasons, invited to attend a Butlins coaching course with Johnny Leach, and probably the highlight, an England trial.

In most of these achievements Mark was accompanied by his lifelong friend Nigel Bates, (who in any other era would have made the headlines himself) and the two of them picked up numerous doubles titles, including the Essex Junior Closed.

The England trial did not work out well for Mark, his lack of 'steel' letting him down. In fact, his only 'international' experience came when Essex played West Germany at the legendary St Lukes in front of a full house.

In the 1961/62 season, he had lost none of his touch and he must have felt a degree of satisfaction when before a packed house at Hoffmanns, he lifted the Men's Singles title for the first time.

By now, Mark had joined Hoffmanns and in subsequent years he moved to Cromptons, Witham Crittall, Rosebery, Post Office and Old Chelmsfordians before becoming a member of his present Club, ECC.

Ten years after his first success, in 1971 he again won the Men's Singles and then in 1981 he found himself in the semi-finals. Could he repeat the ten-year cycle? Without in any way detracting from the eventual winner, there were many who hoped that he could, but the years told, and it was not to be.

In the early 1970's Mark became interested in coaching and is now acknowledged to be one of the finest coaches in Essex. His main work has been carried out at Brentwood, with Graham Moon and Malcolm Cole, and it is in coaching that Mark has found the greatest fulfilment,

As a youngster, one of those who made a great impression on him was the late Jack Carrington and Mark says he has always tried to recall how Jack approached his coaching to try to follow the same high standards. That those standards have been reached is evidenced by the tremendous success of those players coached by Mark, his own son Neil being amongst those who played for Essex Junior 1st team, and Lisa Hayden who went on to do what Mark was unable to achieve, play for England.

Currently Mark is enjoying himself in Division 2, playing socially. Twenty--five years ago, a game against the 'cub' was something to be feared; today it is a pleasant way to spend an evening.

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16. CHARLIE WHEELER

Charlie Wheeler had already made an impact on table tennis before he appeared on the Chelmsford scene.

In the years before the War, he had turned to table tennis to while away the time in the jobless society of the depression in his native Yorkshire. He quickly became champion of Scarborough and then County champion, before moving south with his family to Brighton. Here he continued his winning way, taking both the Brighton and Sussex titles. He was on the verge of England selection when war came, and like many of his generation other things occupied his time, and his table tennis went into limbo. Even so, he still managed to take titles in places as far apart as Nottingham and India whilst serving in the Army. However, this enforced lull in his playing career undoubtedly deprived him of an England cap, and on his return to civilian life his chance, like so many others, had gone for ever.

When he arrived in Chelmsford, he took the League by storm being a member of the great Marconi team that held complete sway for more than 15 years. Afterwards, he took his bat to Crompton, Crittalls, and eventually English Electric.

He won a succession of League and Cup medals, but it is probably for his exploits as an individual player that he will best be remembered. He was Men's Champion nine times, had the same number of successes in the Men's Doubles, and an incredible nineteen wins in the Veterans Singles, a feat that is unlikely to be equalled. His total of all individual titles is 42, a figure now passed by David Newman. In his later years, Charlie confined his tournament appearances to the annual Hard Bat event and was a hard man to beat.

Charlie did not confine his interests to Chelmsford, becoming County champion at both senior and veteran level, and being selected for the first ever county match played in Essex, alongside World Champion Johnny Leach and international Jack Carrington. He was only selected for Essex once more, in spite of a satisfactory debut, and so never received an Essex badge.

Charlie was a table tennis addict who never lost faith in his trusty hard bat, a larger than usual weapon of great weight. He was a master of the long game and never really annihilated opponents, just wore them down. So effective was his style of play that in his heyday, he went over 450 games without defeat in the Chelmsford First Division. Even in the twilight of his career, such was his reputation and aura that it was still regarded as an achievement to beat him. Indeed, there are many who would dearly have liked to get the better of him but never did.

Having started his career in 1929, Charlie reached his own Golden Jubilee in 1979 and to commemorate the landmark, the League presented him with a suitably inscribed silver salver. Sadly, less than two years later Charlie died. Typical of the man, he had been putting in some practice over the Christmas holidays for the second half of the season, but making his way home on his trusty bicycle, he collapsed and died. It was not quite the way that Charlie would have wished to go - he would rather have had his bat in his hand than in his saddle bag.

So, a legend disappeared from the table tennis scene, but his memory lives on in the shape of the Charlie Wheeler trophy, awarded to the most noteworthy performance by a junior at the Individual Championships.

This appropriately links this tournament, where Charlie had so many successes, with the younger players, whom Charlie was eagerly helping to coach in the intricacies of the game that he knew so well and loved so much.

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17. THE OFFICERS

President

1935 - 1937 Mr C Corti Woodcock
1937 - 1939 His Worship the Mayor of Chelmsford
1939 - 1945 League in suspension
1945 - 1970 His Worship the Mayor of Chelmsford
1970 - 1980 Mr Tom Mayer
1980 - 1983 Mr Pat Dukes
1983 - 1984 His Worship the Mayor of Chelmsford
1984 - date Mr Hugh Piper

Chairman

1935 - 1938 Mr F C Gozzett
1938 - 1939 Mr Chris Emmett
1939 - 1945 League in suspension
1945 - 1948 Mr Chris Emmett
1948 - 1950 Mr Fred Thurgood
1950 - 1953 Mr Stan Precious
1953 - 1959 Mr Eric White
1959 - 1965 Mr Tom Mayer
1965 - 1967 Mr Hugh Piper
1967 - 1972 Mr Pat Dukes
1972 - 1974 Mr Gordon Lightfoot
1974 - 1981 Mr Chris Hibbitt
1981 - 1985 Mr Ian Whiteside
1985 - date Mr Chris Dafforn

Secretary

1935 - 1939 Mr George King (also Treasurer)
1939 - 1945 League in suspension
1945 - 1948 Mr Stan Precious (resigned December 1948)
1948 - 1950 Miss Eileen Ainsworth
1950 - 1958 Mr Percy McDonald
1958 - 1960 Mr Pat Dukes
1960 - 1965 Mr Hugh Piper
1965 - 1967 Mrs Grace Levett
1967 - 1970 Mr Hugh Piper
1970 - 1975 Mr Ian Whiteside
1975 - 1977 Mr John Firth
1977 - 1982 Mr Chris Dafforn
1982 - 1984 Mr Charlie Cruse (resigned February 1984)
1984 - date Miss Nicola Cheek

Treasurer

1935 - 1939 Mr George King (also Secretary)
1939 - 1945 League in suspension
1945 - 1949 Mr Stan Precious (also Secretary until December 1948)

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1949 - 1950 Miss Eileen Ainsworth
1950 - 1953 Mr Eric White
1953 - 1958 Mr Percy McDonald (also Secretary)
1958 - 1960 Mr Pat Dukes (also Secretary)
1960 - 1965 Mr Hugh Piper (also Secretary)
1965 - 1973 Mr Rod Gregory
1973 - 1974 Mr Fred Clarke
1974 - 1975 Mr Rod Gregory
1975 - 1977 Mr Brian Cook
1977 – to date Mr Jim Rollings

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18. THE COUNTY MATCHES

The County Championships was introduced into the table tennis calendar during the 1948/49 season, and Essex, operating in the Home Counties Division, selected Chelmsford as the location for their first home fixture in the new competition. Their opponents were Bedfordshire and the match was played at Marconi's on Saturday 12 February 1949. Essex fielded an attractive line up of Johnny Leach Jack Carrington (both English Internationals) and Chelmsford's own Charlie Wheeler. The occasion was considered a success and the Management Committee of the day resolved to seek another County match for the following season. In the event they staged two, against Buckinghamshire in the Home Counties Division at Marconi Girls Pavilion, which Essex won 5-4, and a Premier Division match against Warwickshire. The latter was put on at Cromptons and with newly crowned World Champion Johnny Leach in the Essex team, a large crowd was assured. The result was a 7-3 win for the home side and the County Committee rated it as the most successful event of the season both from the staging and financial point of view. About 440 spectators were present, and as the arrangement was that the host league would receive a third of the net profit to quote the General Secretary's report to the AGM ' Chelmsford received the sum of £4-6-8 (£4.33p) as financial reward for staging the match'.

This success however, had a backlash, because on being allocated the Essex v Middlesex match for the following season, there was considerable controversy within the Committee on the question of a venue suitable to cater for the large audience that was expected to be attracted to the match. There were doubts expressed on being able to get sufficient seating into Cromptons. The Casino (on the site of what is now the Chancellor Hall) was favoured by the County Committee, but the locals thought that the cost of hire would be prohibitive and tiering and lighting could also be a problem. Hoffmanns Social Club was put forward as an alternative as long as this could be adapted to provide the appropriate conditions.

In the end, Hoffmanns was deemed unsuitable, Cromptons Social Centre was not available, so the match was to go ahead at the Casino on Wednesday 24 January 1951. The event, according to the League minutes was a huge success, the venue being filled to capacity with hundreds of other would be spectators being turned away. The County Association felt they had done well with a profit to show of £23-12-5d (£23.62), and 4 guineas (£4.20) of this was passed to the Chelmsford League.

Once again, Essex fielded Johnny Leach whilst Middlesex had the legendary Victor Barna and the Rowe twins in their team. But it was not an Essex night on the table with the visitors winning 8-2. Leach's two victories in the singles, including a 21-12, 21-16 win over Barna added up to the home side's successes.

With this obvious success under their belts, Chelmsford seemed to be destined to be in the forefront for County home fixtures for years ahead. Indeed, they were asked to stage the plum match against Warwickshire the following season. Strangely, however, the Committee of the day had qualms about this saying that as they had staged a Warwickshire match in 1949, they thought that either Yorkshire or Gloucestershire would be more attractive opponents. They did not feel that Warwickshire would be able to bring enough spectators to offset the heavy expenses which would be incurred in hiring the Casino again. After protracted negotiations between the County and League, a compromise could not be reached and so no Premier County match was played in Chelmsford that year, mainly it was said, because of the lack of a suitable venue.

Despite this, Chelmsford did have a slice of the County action that season in the shape of Essex Seconds v Devon, which was played on 3 November 1951 at Christy's. The Committee decided that admission should be by programme only, these to be priced at 2/- (10p) each. They also decided that no advertising for the match would be done, although as a compromise decided to

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display one poster in Pope and Smith's shop. In the circumstances, it was not altogether surprising that only 38 programmes were sold for the match and that, after allowing for the cost of printing, there was a profit of just 12/6 (62p). This did not include the cost of refreshments for players and officials, and the Chelmsford Committee decided that they should cover the total cost of 10/- (50p). On reporting to the AGM of that year, the General Secretary said that the support given to the match was not good, and as a result, the Committee's aim to make a reasonable profit to help boost the depleted County funds had been abortive.

The decision to reject a Premier Division match that season and the apparent disaster of the Second Team match, would appear to have been a major setback for a whole decade was to pass before any senior matches were to be seen again in the Chelmsford area. During this time, several junior matches were put on, with the YMCA invariably being the venue. Two of these are worthy of mention, namely the match against Suffolk on Saturday 8 December 1956. Because of petrol rationing, the visitors were travelling by train and to make it more convenient for them, start of play had been brought forward to 5 pm. Adults were charged 1/6d (7p) and juniors 9d, and a maximum of 20 juniors from the YMCA were to be admitted free of charge. A profit of £1-11-4d (£1.57) was made by the County, who generously gave one guinea to the League. In turn, the League donated this sum back to the County!

Suffolk were again the opposing team when the County juniors were in town in December 1962 and included in their line up two youngsters who were to loom large in the Essex and indeed England scene in the future, namely Chester Barnes and Stuart Gibbs.

Senior matches returned to Chelmsford in January 1963. Even then, that is not strictly correct, as the Essex Seconds v Huntingdonshire match took place at Crittall Witham. However, Chelmsford proper, and Cromptons Writtle Road in particular, was the scene of a 10-0 win by the Second team over Suffolk during October 1963.

The 1964/65 season was to prove a vintage and historic year for Essex table tennis - they became County Champions for the first time, but unfortunately Chelmsford had not seen any of the action leading to this triumph. This prompted questions at the 1965 AGM as to why the County Town was being starved, and had been for fourteen years, of top flight County matches. The reason given was lack of a suitable venue at a cost which could be afforded. However, a promise was given that the matter would be investigated by the new Committee. It is unclear as to whether or not it was, but four years elapsed before the cream of Essex table tennis were to make a re-appearance in the County Town. In the interim, the only County action was a junior match against Norfolk in January 1966, originally planned to take place at Crittall Witham but switched at the last minute to St Lukes at Canning Town.

So we come to 22 March 1969, after a break of 18 years, Essex first team re-appeared in Chelmsford for a Premier Division match against Yorkshire. Although Essex unexpectedly lost this match by the narrowest of margins, they did become champions that season. It was reported that the event, sponsored by Pope and Smith and held at King Edward VI Grammar School had been a tremendous success; over 550 people attended hoping to see the two main England players and rivals, Chester Barnes and Denis Neale fight it out but in the event Barnes did not play. The following year, Middlesex were the opponents in January 1970, and as outlined in the General Secretary's report 'Chelmsford were again fortunate in obtaining a plum County Championships tie when at King Edward VI Grammar School, defending champions Essex took on eventual champions Middlesex, A large crowd of over 500 saw a top-class game; unfortunately Essex lost again, rather expected this time, being compelled to field an understrength team'.

It was a fact that playing in Chelmsford seemed to be a jinx as far as the Essex team were concerned but in spite of this Chelmsford was now firmly back on the map for County matches.

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The 1971/72 season saw a repeat of the Essex v Middlesex fixtures in February 1972, with the home side once again finding themselves on the losing end. In order to comply with fire regulations, the Grammar School had to be limited to a seating capacity of 250. On the night, 180 attended, which was considered somewhat disappointing but was put down to the uncertainties surrounding the power cuts that were taking place at the time. However, the match itself survived without being plunged into darkness. A profit of £20 was handed to the County and although some disappointment was expressed at the post mortem carried out by the Committee, the General Secretary pointed out that the event stood up favourably when compared to other county matches played under normal conditions. He added that at a subsequent Premier Division match held in West Essex, there were only 37 people present and that included the players and officials!

So, Chelmsford were now confident that they could match or even better the rest of Essex when it came to staging County matches. However, for some unknown reason, they were not allocated another until 1974/75. The venue was to be Rainsford School and the visitors Cheshire, the match taking place on 2 November 1974. The attendance of about 100 was lower than expected, but it still exceeded the number present at any other County match that season. The home team won the match so breaking the losing sequence in Chelmsford staged matches.

No further matches were held for another four years, when the 'old enemy', Middlesex returned to Chelmsford on 1 April 1978 at Rainsford School in what was to prove a Championship winning season for them. The Essex team was well beaten but it was a significant match for a young Chelmsford player, David Newman. Although he was selected for the squad, he had yet to play in a Premier Division match and there was speculation on whether he would actually make the team. In the event, the selectors did the sensible thing as far as Chelmsford were concerned. Although he did not exactly cover himself in glory, David did enough to retain his place in the team, a place he still holds in 1985.

In the following season, Rainsford School was again earmarked for the senior match against Yorkshire, but industrial unrest amongst school caretakers meant the match was switched to the Chelmer Institute. Just over 100 people were there to see Essex cross swords with their northern opponents.

Twelve months later, on 22 March 1980 at the same venue, Kent were the opposition and were given the whitewash treatment, the home team having a comprehensive win in what was to become a Championship season.

The 1980/81 season was to be the last season when individual Premier matches were played around the counties, the decision having been taken that the matches should be played at central venues over two weekends. So Warwickshire became the last visitors to Chelmsford on 28 February 1981, again at the Chelmer Institute, but sadly spectator attendance was very poor.

So where do we stand in 1985? Well, Essex had a disastrous season in 1984 and were relegated for the first time ever from the top echelon. Let us hope it will not be long before they reclaim what would be regarded as their rightful place amongst the top counties. Perhaps we might see Essex playing in Chelmsford once again, and who knows, have the level of support that would mean would be spectators had to be turned away in their hundreds as they were in 1951.

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19. THE OPEN TOURNAMENTS

The Chelmsford League is not well known for its Open Tournaments and indeed there has not been one since 1973. According to recent records, the first Chelmsford Open Championship was staged at Great Baddow Comprehensive School on 5 February 1972, but research has established that the first Open was on 10 March 1934! The event was played in the Blue Bird Cafe. According to the press reports, a table was borrowed from the Chelmsford Conservative Club. There were 52 entries, including 2 women, with the eventual winner a certain S G W Bradley (Romford) who defeated S Orrin (Chelmsford). The event was organised by L Monk and Dudley Pope, the latter an Essex professional cricketer. Obviously, Dudley was a useful table tennis player as he later beat the winner in an exhibition match after the final.

Despite this interesting dip into the past, to most people 1972 was the first 'real' Chelmsford Open. It was designated a One Star Tournament with the Men's Singles Winner receiving a prize of £20 with £14 for the Ladies. Nobody had any real idea as to the quantity or quality of players that would be attracted, but in fact 150 entered, far more than had been optimistically hoped. The number one seed was Les Haslam of Middlesex who at the time was ranked 5 in England. In the Ladies event the former Lesley Bell, now Lesley Radford, ranked 3 in England, was number one seed.

One of the motives in staging the event was to use the facilities at the School during the entire weekend - with the Open on the Saturday and our own Closed on the Sunday. In previous years the League Closed had been played over several weeks during the evenings, and this was an opportunity to bring it all together. Whilst reducing the number of evenings to which the Committee were committed, organising the weekend was no easy task. It took until the early hours of Saturday morning to set up the Hall, whilst catering was an enormous problem which required as much help as running the table tennis. Both singles events were won by the number 2 seeds, Roger Chandler of Sussex the Men's and Shelagh Hession of Essex the Ladies. Shelagh who was, and still is, a fine defensive player, not only won the event, but also wrecked the scheduling with her marathon matches. Roger Chandler was also a defender and it was a very late finish on Saturday evening. Nevertheless, there was still sufficient enthusiasm to have a go the following year.

The ETTA Tournament Committee were impressed enough with the organisation and conditions to award the Chelmsford Open Two Star status for 1973, and so the Men's prize rocketed to £25. Once again the weekend was a mammoth piece of organisation. Panic set in when it was found that access to the Hall could not be gained until after 10.00 pm Friday. At 2.30 am a weary band left for a few brief hours sleep. Without any outside light it was not appreciated that the sun would cause problems and so at 8.00 am that same band were hard at it, blocking out all the windows before the players arrived.

The 1972 event had been an unqualified success; and all the players entered into the spirit of the competition. Sad to relate, a year later there were less amicable individuals in the tournament, and this was the principal reason for deciding not to continue - a classic case of 'biting the hand that feeds you'. The other main inhibitor was the growth of the Closed which required two days and would have meant a completely separate organised weekend.

The events of the Blue Bird Cafe and Great Baddow Comprehensive School form part of the League's history but what of the future?

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20. INTERNATIONALS

In May 1972, a phone call to the then League Secretary, Ian Whiteside, from Albert Shipley, at the time Administrative Secretary of the ETTA, brought international table tennis to Chelmsford for the first time.

The ETTA were looking for two matches to be staged against the Dutch Junior team, and for convenience of travelling, East Anglia was the most suitable area. With the Chelmsford League enjoying a reputation for efficient administration, it was the first approached and of course the Committee said yes (Ipswich was the second town chosen).

After two successful County matches at King Edward VI Grammar School, it was the natural venue for the event which was to take place on 22 July. As the first approach was not made until late June, time was short and a great deal had to be done very quickly.

The Dutch team arrived at Parkeston on the Friday evening and were accommodated at various houses in the Maldon area. On Saturday morning, they were welcomed to Maldon by the Mayor, before going off to practice at Maldon Wanderers Club. In the afternoon, a civic reception was held in Chelmsford at which the Mayor, Cllr Les King entertained both Dutch and English teams and officials to tea.

The match itself was something of a disappointment, England starting as favourites but losing 4-5. The Dutch team of Leon van Zuylen, Hans Lingen, Bert van der Ham, Micke Arntz and Renee Fierlier were more determined than their English counterparts, including the now legendary Desmond Douglas who "in his first international had a severe attack of stage fright." In addition to Douglas, the England line up was David Alderson, Ian Horsham, Anita Stevenson and Janet Hellaby. The home successes came from Horsham, Alderson, Douglas and Hellaby. Obviously, the experience did young Douglas no lasting harm!

After the match, the players and officials attended a reception held at the Writtle Community Centre at which mementos were presented by Clive Rippon of Pope and Smith.

The local press reported both teams were full of praise for the arrangements, as were the ETTA officials.

The major disappointment, apart from the result, was the attendance. However, with the match arranged at such short notice, and the local holiday season just started, perhaps the total of just over 300 was not so bad after all. And at 30p, admission charges were not really exorbitant!

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21. GROWTH

When George King made the first tentative moves toward forming a Table Tennis League in Chelmsford, could he have foreseen how, 50 years on, his efforts would result in one of the biggest Leagues in England?

It must be borne in mind that in the Thirties, the economy was depressed, and many were unemployed. Locally, the worst effects of the depression were not apparent, and undoubtedly this relative prosperity helped the League in its early days. At the time, a large proportion of local people worked for one of the three large employers in Chelmsford, Marconi, Hoffmann and Crompton Parkinson. How things have changed. One of the three, Crompton Parkinson no longer exists in Chelmsford, another, Hoffmanns, has undergone a name change and a substantial contraction of activity, leaving just Marconi. In those far off days, commuting as we know it did not really exist; now over 10,000 people daily board trains to London for their journey to work.

This is not a social history of Chelmsford in the last 50 years, and yet, it is inevitable that the two are inextricably linked. In the immediate post war years, Management Committee meetings started at 6.00; most members having a short walk from their Town Centre employment and finished by 9.30 so that the bus before last could be caught home, the last bus often being full! Today, meetings are due to commence at 7.30 rarely do, and no-one is particularly bothered if they go on until 11.00 for all have, or can arrange, transport.

Such changes in habits and social conditions have of course permeated through the League, and certainly the increased availability of private transport has led to more people playing and travelling greater distances to do so.

However, probably the major factor in the growth of the Chelmsford League is the way in which the population of the Town, and the surrounding villages, has increased. Pre-war, Chelmsford was little more than a market town with none of the huge dormitory estates, and expanded villages. With such an influx of people, it was inevitable that the number playing table tennis would steadily increase. That it increased in the fashion it did is however a tribute to the many fine administrators who have contributed to the running of the League.

The steady growth can be seen by reference to the statistics on the next page. Although there have been minor fluctuations the trend is upwards and it is hoped this will continue. It is interesting to note that in 1950/51 there were 22 clubs supplying 49 teams - by 1985/86, the number of clubs had increased by only one third, whereas the number of teams has more than doubled. Quite clearly clubs have become larger, and this is no doubt a reflection on the two problems faced by many sports, lack of premises and administrators.

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22. THE FUTURE

A Golden Jubilee is a good time to reflect; to reminisce over the good times and to remember the players and officials who have given their time so freely to promote and maintain the game locally. It is also appropriate to look forward to the future.

The recent sponsorship deal announced by the English Table Tennis Association with the computer company, Triumph Adler, gives an indication of how professional the sport has become at the highest level, but at local level it is still very much 'amateur', and this is not being disrespectful to either players or officials. Fortunately, the Chelmsford League has and continues to be, blessed with many fine players and administrators without whom we would not be enjoying the present high standard of play.

Nationally the numbers of people affiliated to the ETTA have declined - many will recall the once mighty East London League, which has now disbanded. Against this trend the League still has over 600 members playing in 114 teams in 10 divisions, but we must not be complacent. Under the watchful eyes of an increasing band of coaches, the future looks bright provided the interest of the juniors can be maintained despite the attractions of other interests.

The one major disappointment in the last 50 years is that the League still does not have its own Headquarters. It has always been an ambition to own or lease premises to enable table tennis to be played on a regular basis for all those interested in the game. Unfortunately this appears as far away as ever in view of the considerable costs involved.

However, we must look on the positive side and hopefully publicity from the Jubilee will give the game a boost locally to continue the progress made in the last half century.

