

History of Ridgeway Tennis Club (Founded 1922)

In the First World War 1914-18, 23 young men from Ridgeway lost their lives fighting for their country. In 1919 the village residents decided that there should be a War Memorial together with gardens to commemorate the loss. This would stand on the grounds of Kent House (the large old building next to where the memorial garden is now).



The house and land was left in trust to the village. The front garden provided a bowling green and a putting green, as well as the memorial itself. Land at the rear provided space for two tennis courts, and the adjacent fields provided a cricket wicket, a football field and a general playing field for residents.

By 1922 plans were well advanced but on the 6th April 1922 a group of people met to form a tennis club to play on the site. So 1922 marks an historic landmark for the village and the club. Although there were no courts to play at that stage they worked hard to raise some money for the necessary works and the first actual play, and the first tennis tournament, took place in 1923. The courts were grass. A silver trophy was donated to the Tennis Club for the Mixed Doubles, known as The Else Cup. That trophy is still played for today, some 99 years later. At the same time a Bowls Club was being formed and they too play for an identical trophy. The use of the land, the sports facilities and the objectives of how the land should be managed were contained in a trust deed dated 1923 simply titled Ridgeway War Memorial. The sports clubs became sub-sections of the War Memorial Institute. Ridgeway Sports and Social Club became the working title when the club formally became a Registered Charity in 1992. The wording of the original trust deed forms the basis of the constitution of the sports club to this day.

The tennis club continued through the thirties until the Second World War intervened when it understandably came to a halt.



It wasn't until the late fifties and early sixties that the club was revived - one all-weather court at first and a second one completed in 1968. The club then entered the Sheffield and District

Parks League in 1970 as an Associate Club. The club flourished and had three men's teams and two mixed teams in the period up to the mid 1980s.

In 1986 the club lost the use of the courts when the old community building, Kent House was sold and became a private dwelling. The old tennis courts formed part of the back garden and were included in the sale.

Despite the sale of the building and the courts, the tennis club continued to function and in the next few years played variously at Hollinsend Park, Eckington School, Westfield Campus and Graves Tennis Centre. The club continued competing in the Parks Leagues through the period when it was based outside Ridgeway and eventually returned to three new floodlit courts in 1983. A new village hall was built with modern changing rooms the whole area was re-landscaped with a new bowling green and new cricket and football pitches laid. In 1998 the Parks League finished and many of the clubs, including Ridgeway, joined the Sheffield and District LTA. Many of the parks clubs no longer exist but Ridgeway carried on. In 2005 applications for grant funding towards the cost of re-surfacing the courts, colour painting and replacement of surround fencing were successful and £15,000 was received from Viridor Waste Management and Awards for All - a lottery based grant body.



The tennis club has continued to compete in local leagues, as well as offering social and competitive tennis and coaching. It is still at heart a real community club.

Ridgeway Sports and Social Club has also flourished. The present village hall, known now as the Memorial Hall, has been re-designed over the last six years and has seen a new building added with up to date changing rooms for football and cricket and toilets and a new room, called the Centenary Room added as well. Funding was helped by a Biffa Award grant under the Landfill Communities Scheme.

The whole of the site is financially self-sufficient and income is derived received from member clubs and hire of the facilities. The Memorial Hall is a popular venue for many local social events.

Finally it is sad that as we celebrate the formation of this club, established to commemorate those who lost their lives in that awful war over 100 years ago, that war is threatening Europe once again. So far as the tennis club is concerned we look forward to the next 100 years.

Mick Mason - Chairperson