

The Beginnings of the North East Cheshire Lawn Tennis League

A personal review by the late Harold B. Bagshaw (founder and former member of the League Executive Committee.)

In the years before the Second World War and the years immediately afterwards, the better tennis clubs played against each other in the Manchester & District Lawn Tennis League based at the Birch Lane Tennis Club in Longsight. The standard of play was high, and the League was so popular that clubs as far as Rochdale, Bury and Oldham participated. Unfortunately, the rules did not restrict distant clubs from joining and consequently this difficulty was the inspiration for a new, more confined league.

The pioneers of the North East Cheshire Lawn Tennis League as it was to become known were Mr. N. Ryan and Mr. H. Barlow of the Cheadle Hulme Cricket, Tennis and Bowls Club, Ladybridge Road, Mr. M. Lord of Bramhall Park, Mr. G. H. Lane of Gatley, Mr. H. Clarke of Mirrlees and Messrs. H. B. & H. E. Bagshaw of Davenport.

The new league comprised sixteen clubs from Stockport, Heaton Mersey, Bramhall, Disley, Handforth, Cheadle, Cheadle Hulme, Gatley, Romiley and Marple, all within eight miles of Stockport Town Hall. The names of individual clubs are given below. Thirty-six Teams were entered forming four divisions, two for men and two for women. League subscription was £1/1- or 10/6 per team, 1st division and A division, respectively. The entry of the Bramhall Park Club set the standard as they were the reigning champions of the Manchester & District League. Affluent members of the Cheadle Hulme Club gave most of the magnificent silverware.

The League has operated its unbroken run of fifty years growing to forty-two clubs from its original sixteen and eighteen divisions from its original four.

The league has always held its own Annual Tournament and initially arranged interleague matches when the best of our league would play the best of other leagues. These were extremely popular events initially, but eventually they lost their appeal. In 1958 our then President, Mr. H. Acton gave the league a cup to be played for annually when the match season was concluded thus expanding the competitive season by four or five weeks.

In 1978 and to mark the League's first twenty-five years, a Rose- Bowl was given to the League to be played for annually where clubs were invited to send a mixed pair. In recent times this has become a most popular event.

Finally in 1986 Slazenger assumed sponsorship of the League and the name changed to the Slazenger North East Cheshire Lawn Tennis League.

Members of the first Executive Committee 1954:

- President: A. Dorrington (Cheadle Hulme)
- Chairman of the Executive Committee: N. Ryan (Cheadle Hulme)
- General Secretary: N. H. Lord (Bramhall Park)
- Match Secretary: R. Fairburn (Bramhall Park)
- Assistant Match Secretary: H. E. Bagshaw (Davenport)
- Treasurer: F. G. Lane (Gatley)

Other Members of Executive Committee:

- H. B. Bagshaw (Davenport)
- P. A. Coulthurst (Woodside)
- H. Barlow (Cheadle Hulme)
- H. Kay (Queensgate)
- T. Taylor (Cheadle)
- Auditor: J. Thompson

Clubs in the first competitive season 1954:

- Brabyns
- Bramhall (Queensgate)
- Bramhall Lane
- Bramhall Park
- Broadway (Cheadle)
- Cheadle Cricket
- Cheadle Hulme
- Davenport
- Gatley
- Greave
- Handforth Hall
- Heaton Mersey
- Mirrlees
- Romiley
- Ryecroft Park
- Woodside