

The History of Carrigaline Tennis Club

In early 1985 a group of people interested in tennis came together in Carrigaline with a view to establishing a tennis club. At that time there was no history of tennis in the village. The Community School, which had been built a few years previously, had three tennis courts that were not being utilised during the Summer months. The school was quite willing to rent these courts to the Club but only during the holiday period.

Very quickly the popularity of tennis became obvious and large numbers of adults and children joined the club. Competitions were organised and, having affiliated to the Munster Council of the ILTA, teams were entered in inter-club competitions.

It soon became apparent that the school facilities were not adequate for the large numbers interested in the game. During 1986 the possibility of purchasing land, to build new tennis courts which could be used all year round, was investigated. Local landowners, including Cork County Council which has a land bank in the area, were approached with a view to purchase but all were rejected for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was cost. (In tandem with this search for land fund raising events continued).

Approaches were made and negotiations commenced in 1987 between the local GAA club and the Tennis Club. The GAA Club, some years previously, had built two tennis courts for their members but these had fallen into disrepair.

The Tennis Club proposed leasing the ground adjacent to, and including, the two existing courts.

Agreement was reached on the terms of the lease and while legal documents were being drawn up by Solicitors representing both parties, the Tennis Club was drawing up plans for four new tennis courts on the proposed site.

In April 1988 the lease was signed and a contract to build the courts was awarded to John A. Wood Ltd. with work to commence immediately.

The project was completed in early June and a 'Portacabin' purchased for use as a Club House.

With the official opening of the courts on 18th June 1989, membership soared with the temperatures but unlike the weather the membership continued to rise. An extensive programme of coaching was set up with almost everyone taking lessons. Indeed over 100 Junior/Juvenile members took regular coaching each Saturday morning under the

watchful eye of an experienced coach, Pat Coleman, and several qualified assistants.

Carrigaline Tennis Club catered for large numbers of people of all ages in a growing community. Family participation is very important as tennis is one of the few sports which all members of the family can play. It is quite common to see parents with their children enjoying themselves on the courts on a summer afternoon instead of going to the beach! It is a marvellous thing to see a sports complex such as the GAA Club allowing greater use to be made of its facilities. Many times during the Summer it seemed that half the population of Carrigaline was participating in sport, with hurling and football being played on the field while all four tennis courts were occupied and spectators having a hard time trying to watch all three!

Thursday night has now become firmly established as 'Club Night'. Junior/Juvenile tournaments take place regularly during the summer months.

The cost of these new courts to Carrigaline Tennis Club was £31,000 of which the club had to borrow in the region of £25,000. This was quite a large amount of money for any club to begin its playing life. However, the committee felt confident that the repayments could be met with the debt being paid off quickly. Indeed six members of that committee had such faith in the local community that they were brave enough to act as guarantors for this money.

In as far as possible we have tried to involve all club members and as many of the Community at large who were willing to participate in our fund raising ventures. Indeed some of our more successful ones had an element of fun and sociability about them which had popular appeal. It was our intention to clear the existing debt within three years and to start on a further programme of expansion.

Already it was becoming apparent that four courts were not enough to cater for the numbers wishing to play. Lighting for night and, because of the high volume of shift work in operation in the Carrigaline area, early morning playing, is also essential and the Committee had enough foresight to insist that ducting for this was incorporated when the courts were being laid.

To be continued.....