

# THE MILLENNIUM CUP

It may just be a small, local, friendly competition among the five tennis clubs in Streatham, south London, but the Millennium Cup is already notable for its longevity and its popularity, as Barbara Wancke, the founder of the inter-club competition, explains.

**I**t is also unique. Mostly because matches are played on a level playing field, offering competitive opportunity

for new members who do not ordinarily play in the Surrey County League.

The idea is to encourage new members into match play under friendly conditions and more experienced players who already compete in the Surrey league are discouraged from participating under a Standard of Play criteria devised by the Organising Committee on which representatives from each participating club serve.

"It has proven to be a popular and successful format involving all ages," said Barbara Wancke.

"Every year I ask if the clubs want to continue with it, and every year they say yes. This year will be our 17th edition."

They are playing for the coveted Millennium Cup trophy donated by the three inaugural clubs - Telford Park, Wigmore and Woodfield Grove.

It is a beautiful crystal vase centrepiece measuring 215cm in height and 145mm in diameter and stands on a wooden base with a silver sleeve

on which are engraved the champions of each year. Soon it will need another tier.

It is a big deal for all concerned, and being Millennium Cup Champions somewhat of a feather in a club's hat.

The title has now been won six times by Telford Park Lawn Tennis Club, four times by Wigmore Lawn Tennis Club, three by Grafton Tennis & Squash Club and twice by Norbury Park Lawn Tennis Club, while Woodfield Grove has won it just once, in 2013.

## A HEALTHY RIVALRY AMONG LOCAL CLUBS

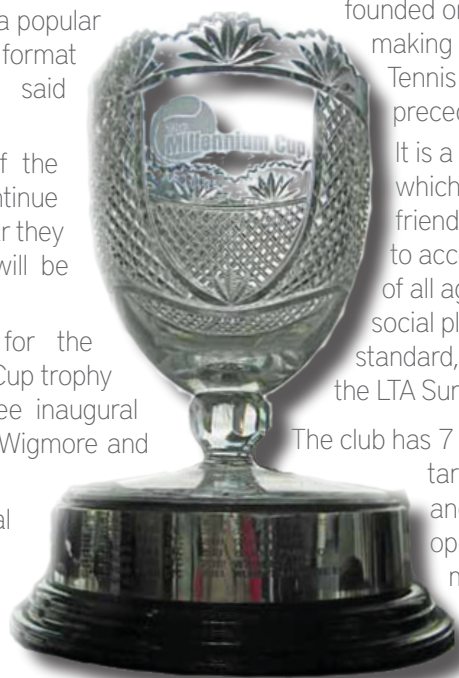
**Telford Park Lawn Tennis Club** was founded on 1st August 1880, making it the second oldest Tennis Club in London, preceded only by Wimbledon.

It is a thriving club which prides itself on its friendliness and its ability to accommodate members of all ages and abilities from social players to those of a high standard, who regularly play in the LTA Surrey League matches.

The club has 7 hard courts: 5 floodlit tarmac and 2 acrylic; and a new clubhouse opened in 2007 with many facilities, including a licensed bar, kitchen and function room.

Situated in the most beautiful grounds, which team

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**THE FIRST  
MILLENNIUM CUP**  
hosted by Woodfield Grove  
Tennis Club





## TELFORD PARK LAWN TENNIS CLUB

played before mixing with others, the accent being on playing for fun, mingling players of all levels and introducing new members.

The Club Championships are staged May-July, there is a Winter Mixed tournament and two all-day doubles tournaments in June and September.

Grafton fields 4 men's teams and 3 ladies' teams in the Surrey Leagues and players can enter the Surrey Knockout tournaments.

Opened in May 1911, **Wigmore Lawn Tennis Club** is situated in a quiet enclave, in attractive grounds, close to the Streatham High Road and convenient for Balham, Streatham, Tooting and

with wildlife, the club offers a large lawned area, many species of mature trees and a 'wilderness' behind the clubhouse.

Nearby **Grafton Tennis & Squash Club** claims to be the fifth oldest club

in the land, founded in 1888, and now offers 8 all-weather courts, 6 of which are floodlit.

On Wednesday evenings and Sunday afternoons, courts are allotted for social tennis when one short set is







1. WIGMORE  
LAWN TENNIS  
CLUB

2. NORBURY  
PARK

3. WOODFIELD  
GROVE  
TENNIS CLUB

4. GRAFTON LAWN  
TENNIS CLUB

surrounding areas.

A friendly club with a varied membership of all ages, backgrounds and standards of play, Wigmore has increased its intake considerably in recent years and currently numbers around 800 members, including 400 juniors.

With 8 All-weather courts consisting of 4 Artificial Clay, 3 porous acrylic and 1 synthetic grass, 7 of which are floodlit, Wigmore has a cosy clubhouse complete with a fully fitted kitchen, bar, pool table, table tennis and television.

**Norbury Park Lawn Tennis Club** is also one of the oldest tennis clubs in the world, as the successor to Norbury Park Sports Club, which was founded in 1889. The club's facilities include 4 new hard courts and floodlighting, 3 grass courts

for summer use, a clubhouse and a licensed bar.

Located in an attractive setting within Norbury Hall Park, the club has the benefit of car parking space and the clubhouse is regularly hired out for a variety of functions as well as being home to Telten Montessori Nursery.

Streatham's best-kept secret is **Woodfield Grove Tennis Club (WGTC)**, a friendly, social tennis club hidden away among houses between the High Road and Tooting Bec Common.

With 4 floodlit courts, a dynamic coaching team and fielding 7 teams in the Surrey and local competitions, WGTC is secure and accessible at all times, offering plenty of opportunity to join in regardless of standard.

A recreational tennis club since 1924, with strong community links and a lively social section, the club was completely rebuilt in 1998-99 as a result of a Sport England National Lottery grant, and offers 3 cushioned acrylic tennis courts plus a further macadam court, all of which are floodlit.

Refurbished in the spring of 2008 and again in 2016, the modern two-storey clubhouse provides a comfortable licensed lounge bar with Sky TV, and has a kitchen with a hot drinks vending machine and wireless broadband available to members and guests throughout the day.

A quiet room upstairs, also with Sky TV, is used for meetings, Bridge

and Chess, while there are separate changing and shower facilities for men and women with easy access for the disabled, including a lift for getting upstairs.

The Millennium Cup has served to keep these clubs close and collaborative while maintaining a healthy competitive rivalry.

## CELEBRATING 15 YEARS

In 2015 a special event was staged to mark the 15th anniversary of the competition - the Millennium Cup Masters - and Woodfield Grove Tennis Club took full honours.

Hosted by Telford Park, the event celebrated the local team competition that has involved hundreds of members from the clubs of Streatham over the years, both on court and at a magnificent barbecue.

"We wanted to have a one-off event for Millennium Cup participants, past and present," said Barbara Wancke, founder of the competition.

"The Organising Committee decided on a one-day tournament using the new Fast4 format and although it all started out a bit chaotically, it soon got highly competitive!"

Four of the five clubs took part, with Wigmore absent due to being unable to field a team on the day, which was disappointing.

Three rounds of ties were played, with Grafton, Norbury Park, Telford Park and Woodfield Grove playing each other during the course of the day in timed ties over singles, doubles and mixed.

"It was tricky, making sure you got all the matches played in the timeframe," said Nigel Flay, Norbury Park's captain. "But the short format is fun because it engages everyone quickly!"

Fast4 was launched in Australia and allows players to play a quick match by winning four games to win a set with a short tiebreak at three games all.

For the Masters, each match comprised of just one set, with all games won (and lost) counting towards each club's



cumulative score line.

"The aim was to win as many games as possible," said Steve Graham, Telford Park's Captain.

"And lose as few as possible!"

Juliet Griffiths, Chair of the Millennium Cup Organising Committee at the time added: "We have all really enjoyed today. When it was first proposed to the committee, we all got very confused and thought it would never fly but it did and it has been great fun!"

## A NEW YEAR, AND A NEW COMPETITION

Murray Sutton, the current Organising Committee Chairman, is very positive about the future of the Millennium Cup.

"We want to keep it going because it gives our players a chance to compete in a really friendly environment, which is important for those who haven't tried their hands much at matches before.

"It is really special, and also helps to keep the clubs in touch with each other, which is handy.

"Every year, we take a careful look at the rules and exclude certain team members from playing based on their results in the Surrey League.

"This way, new players aren't intimidated or put off by a whitewash loss.

"We are actually trying to get the matches as even and as closely fought as possible, which sometimes is quite hard to do, finding that balance, especially with the juniors who can

improve quite quickly over the summer and then might need to be dropped from the team."

In fact, there are 6 singles and 3 doubles matches to be played in each tie: open men's and women's, men's Over 45s, women's Over 40s, boy's Under 16s and Girl's Under 16s singles; plus men's women's and mixed doubles.

"There is scope for everyone," says Peter Risdon, Woodfield Grove's Chairman who also serves as the Millennium Cup's Referee.

"In the beginning, when we couldn't field juniors, we simply borrowed them from one of the other clubs.

"Now we have juniors who are proud to get the chance to represent their club alongside the senior players. It's great!"

The 17th edition of the Millennium Cup kicks off this month when the league portion of the competition is played over the summer leading up to Wimbledon.

The two top finishers in the league points standings compete for the trophy on Sunday, 17 September, after the summer holidays.

It has proven to be a fine occasion, attended by many from the other clubs as well as members supporting the competing finalists.

Full details, including match reports, photos and results can be found at: [www.millenniumcup.org](http://www.millenniumcup.org).