



The history of the
club, its origins and
changing fortunes

What's different about it?

The club's been around a long time

All the documentation that I have found indicates that the club was formed in 1955 but the uncorroborated stories from some the club's elders indicate it has been around a lot longer than that. I think it possible that the club existed as early as the 1940's - but not under its current name

The earliest information that I have come across came from two of our Vets Club members (Bill Daniels - sadly he is no longer with us) and Peter Keeble - now in his 90's and still playing T.T. as a social sport. Both said that they can remember playing in a wooden "prefab" type pavilion at a Tennis Club in Britannia Road (Bill played for YMCA and Peter for the Police "Lads-Club"), during the 40's - early 50's. Hans Fleck (a former Club Chairman) said that he started playing T.T. at this Tennis Club when he first arrives in Ipswich soon after WW2. (I think he is/was of Austrian descent)

This information is supported in some measure by an extract from an early (probably late 1930's) League Registration Booklet showing that there were only 2 Divisions of 5 (yes five) teams in the whole of Ipswich League, and one of them is YMCA for whom Bill said he played. I don't know the date of the booklet from which the pages came and I haven't managed to track it down - yet!

(T.T. at that time was different: there were 4 players per team with each player playing a single game to 21 against each of the opposing team members)

IPSWICH DISTRICT MEN'S T.T.L. (Founded 1932).
President : Sir John Gauzoul, Bart., M.P., Stoke-park, Ipswich.
Chairman : Mr. W. A. Barker, c/o Wm. Pretty, Ltd., Tower Rampart Ipswich.
Joint Hon. Sec. : Mr. L. C. Field, 73 Elliott-st., Ipswich.
and Treasurer : Mr. E. J. Keeler, 21 Sarbiton-rd., Ipswich.
E.T.T.A. Rep. : Mr. L. C. Field, 73 Elliott-st., Ipswich.
Number of Clubs, 10. Divisions, 2. Approximate Membership, 110.
CLUBS AND SECRETARIES' ADDRESSES.
Church Institute—Mr. F. W. Kell, 113 Princes-st., Ipswich.
County Hall N.A.L.G.O.—Mr. E. Butcher, County Hall, Ipswich.
Loco. Men's Club—Mr. C. Ranson, 86 Rectory-rd., Ipswich.
Pretty's Social Club—Mr. W. A. Barker, c/o Wm. Pretty, Ltd Tower Ramparts, Ipswich.
Russell Road—Mr. R. Colby, c/o Y.M.C.A., Princes-st., Ipswich.
Stoke Fellowship—Mr. D. D. Clarke, 41 Croft-st., Ipswich.
Stowmarket Con. Club—Mr. G. J. Diaper, Haughley New-st. Stowmarket, Suffolk.
Warren Heath—Mr. G. J. Urpeth, 19 Warren Heath-rd., Ipswich.
West End Club—Mr. Gedney, 26 Alderman-rd., Ipswich.
Y.M.C.A.—Messrs. D. Moore and P. Elliott, c/o Y.M.C.A., Princes-st Ipswich.
ISLE OF WIGHT T.T.L. (Founded 1923).
President :
Chairman : Mr. A. Abell, Regent-parade, Shanklin, I.O.W.

Extract from an early League Registration Book (Interesting to note that it was the "Mens" TT League)
Page is from the ETTA Handbook - probably 1930's

If these stories are correct our founder members were playing T.T. together at this Tennis club long before B.T.T.C came about, and were first made "homeless" in the 1950's when (According to both Hans and Allan Cooper - see letter below) the site owner - a table tennis player himself - sold the site for housing. Because the wooden pavilion (Hall) in which they played was of little value to him, he actually gave it to the T.T players

The club (or rather its founder members) had made their first move!

The Club's second "home"

Undaunted, and being keen, the club members (there were only a small number of them of them) dismantled this small building (which could well be the same wooden prefab building that Bill Daniels spoke of) and physically moved it a-bit-at-a-time to a new location on an undeveloped site that is now part of the "Coppleston" School complex. (According to "Hans" and corroborated by Allan Cooper's (Now living in Australia) Email below)

. I will always remember transferring the hall in Britannia Road to a site which was previously a tip. All went well for a while until we had a decided drop at one end and I am not surprised that a new hall was built later on a different site.

In the 60's

Extract from a letter by Alan Cooper (Now in Australia) on the 2023 IDTTL Website

The Club was based in this small re-erected building for a short time when things started to go wrong. The building stood on short timber piers, the foundations of which were paving slabs buried a couple of feet (0.6M) underground (not something the Council Building Inspectors would approve of.) Something – and no one appears to have investigated "what" (but it was probably the paving slabs) failed, and the building developed a very distinct "lean" toward one end. The choice was either level the table up by "blocking" one end (making that end of the table higher than the rules said) or to play on the sloping surface. They opted for the latter!

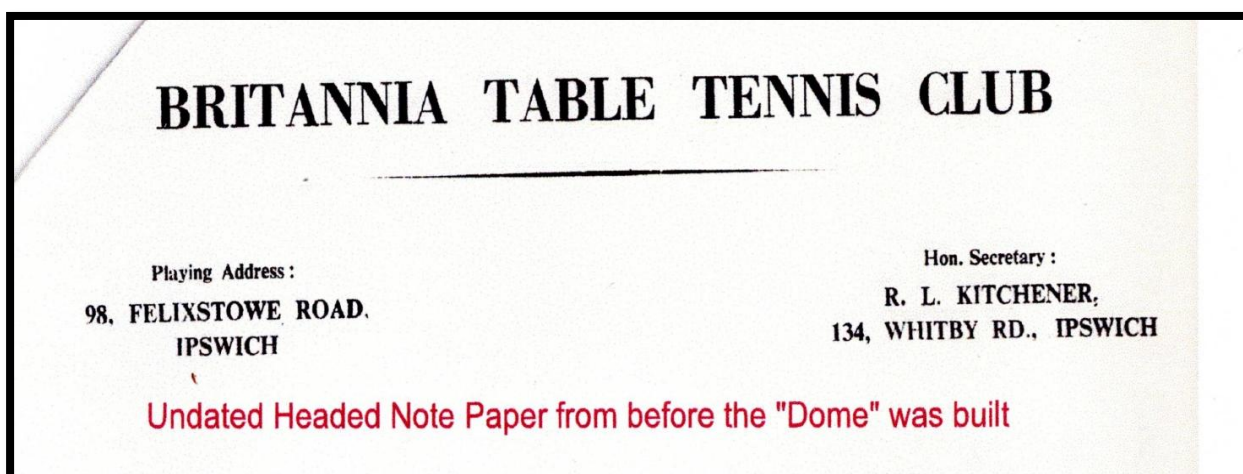
Not so much a matter of choosing which end you want to start your first game, but do you want to play uphill or down? Playing in this situation no doubt gave the game an added dimension

However the arrangement they had with the Education Authority said that the club would vacate the site if the school required the land for expansion and in the mid 50's they were given notice to quit.

The club was homeless again.

The club's third home

The next venue was at No 98 Felixstowe Road: a building more formerly known as "**The Felixstowe Road Ladies Conservative Association**" – a very grand name for what was really a very long, low wooden building in Felixstowe Road (By this time they were known as BTTC)

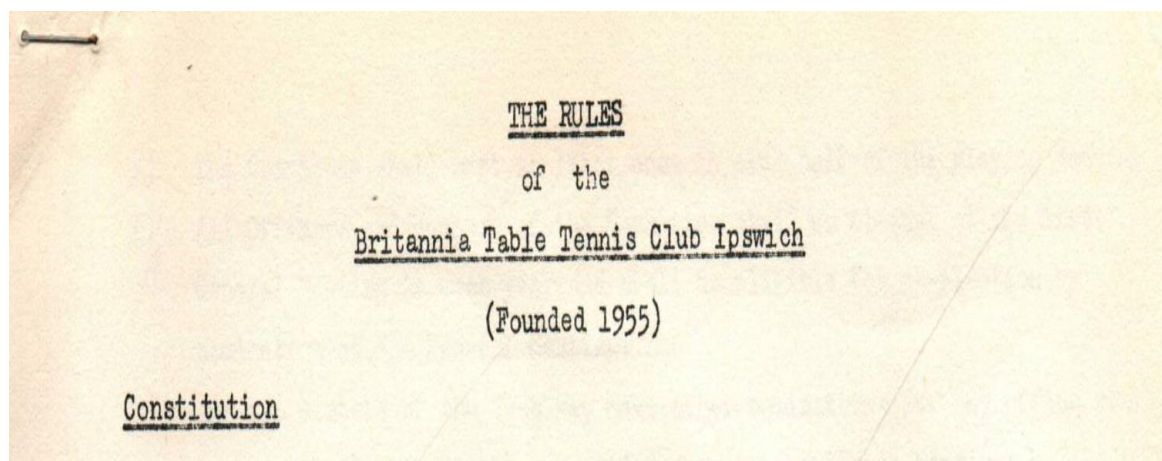


The Conservative club had a single large room divisible into two smaller areas by a “moveable” wooden screen, thus creating two rooms which were the two standard sizes one might expect. The first room was too small to accommodate a T.T table, and the other quite spacious; but the wrong shape for two tables. But - if you slid the dividing screens back - “hey-presto” (at a squeeze) there was space for two tables.

The low ceilings were a problem (you could reach-up and touch them)

That wasn’t all! Because the entrance, “loos” and kitchen were all at one end of the building, and the best court was at the other, there were frequent disruptions requiring the co-operation of all involved.

It did however mean that with more space the club could expand and operate on a more formal basis. The clubs finances were by now sound and a proper Constitution had been drawn-up. The Club colours had now been standardised as Grey and Black, and the charges set at £3.15.0d (£3.75) per year for League playing adults



1. Club Colours

Colours of the Club are Grey and Black. A club badge may be worn by any member competing in League or National events.

2. Club Championships

A roll will be kept by the Secretary of the success of members in local and national championships, Club Championships may be held when requested by a majority of members.

3. Club Premises

Club Play shall take place in the premises of the Fleixstowe Road Ladies Conservative Association, Felixstowe Road, Ipswich. Club nights shall be Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 19.00 hrs. to 22.30 hrs. approximately. Members shall at all times exercise due care and respect

on the nomination of the Team Secretary.

6. Subscriptions

- a) The Club season shall run from 1st September to 31st August.
b) The annual subscription shall be as follows:-

League Playing Members -	£3. 15. 0d.
Junior Playing Members -	£1. 10. 0d.
Temporary Playing Members -	3/6d per match.
Associated Playing Members -	£2. 0. 0d.
Non-Playing -	£1. 0. 0d.

Junior members are those who are under 17 on the preceeding 1st July.

Three Extracts from an early Club Constitution

Our fourth and current home

By the late 1960's Ipswich was growing in prosperity and schools were expanding rapidly, much to the advantage of those in the architectural profession. One of the major items involving the expansion of the education system was the expectation that schools should have proper sports facilities. Now; sports halls - even then - were expensive; but there was a relatively cheap option on the market because during the late 1940's an American Engineer/Architect (R Buckminster-Fuller) had designed a building that fitted the bill perfectly. It was a "Geodesic Dome" (Geodesic is a fancy word for straight bars forming interlocking triangles) which he used to construct buildings that (in theory) can't fall down. As long as the building obeyed certain height-width rules and all the surfaces sloped inward then it could be easily built of timber (Plywood mainly). (The physics are similar to a brick arch - none of it can fall outward because it's all trying to fall inwards, making it a self supporting structure)

All you needed was a flat area where you could cast a suitable concrete slab and - Bingo! You could have a practical, single span building for not too much money. These appeared in several of the schools in Ipswich - and many are still in place

How did this affect "Britannia"? The club chairman of the time was (Hans Fleck) an Architect who happened to be involved in this expansion.

It's a very unusual "home"!

Because Hans was a Table Tennis man it meant that the club had inbuilt expertise. He teamed up with another member - who happened to work letting the sites for the Local Authority - and using their combined efforts, expertise and contacts, the club acquired the lease of a site on what was then a new school (Thurleston High School) being built in Defoe Road, on the outskirts of Ipswich

The club negotiated a 28-year lease for the 0.25-acre site which came into force on Xmas day 1969 for the annual fixed rental of £160:00.

----- subject to and with the benefit
of all existing rights of way light or drainage or other easements (if any) affecting the
demised land YIELDING AND PAYING THEREFOR during the first year of the said term the
rent of Five pounds and during the remainder of the said term **the yearly rent of One
hundred and Sixty pounds** without any deduction (except such deductions therefrom as the
Lessees shall be entitled or authorised to make under the appropriate Income Tax Acts) by
equal half-yearly payments on the Twenty-fifth day of March and the Twenty-ninth day of
September in every year.

Extract from the Club's original 1969 Lease showing the £160 annual Rental

It was signed on behalf of the club by Mssrs Hans Fleck, (Club Chairman) Birkin Haward and Rowland Kitchener) on the 11 December 1969

The club now had a suitable site and knew where they wanted to go, but there was still no venue

Hans - our in-built architect however had the answer – build one! So he arranged to modify one of the buildings designed by Buckminster-Fuller specifically for us.

But who paid for it?

The total cost was agreed at £8460 (£170,000 at today's values), for which the Dept of Education and Science awarded a 50% grant of £4230 (which covered: the Site works £707, Architects fee of £400 and – believe it or not – the purchase of a new TT Table for £64). The numbers still didn't really "tot up" however, so a number other sponsors helped out until all the costs were met, and in 1970 the club built itself a brand new home.

The building belonged to the club who were responsible for all the costs of running and maintaining it, but it stood on a site leased from Ipswich Borough Council. The Lease does however say that any development will become the property of Ipswich Borough Council at the end of the term.

Not a problem in 1969 – but it was to become one when the lease expired in the 1997.

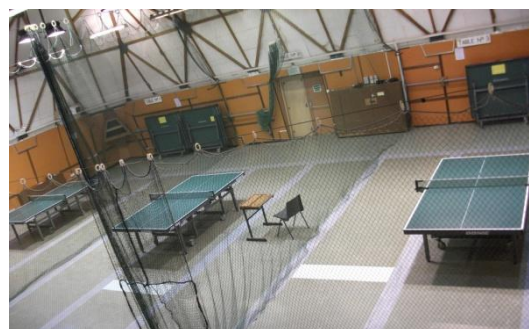
The club could not really afford to have this new building solely for T.T, so it tried to form a Badminton Club for shared use. The building was of sufficient area and height to accommodate two Badminton Courts or three Table Tennis courts. Not too difficult you might imagine, except that the Badminton courts required 4 metres clear headroom at the edges with well distributed light and the T.T requires much less headroom but must have more light directed on to the table. You couldn't put the T.T lights in their ideal position because it will intrude into the headroom of the Badminton courts and neither court will fit easily into a "rounded" shape.

The Badminton club doesn't however look as though it ever materialised – or if it did it was short lived. The bolting points for the net-post are still in the floor of the Dome, but nothing else remains!



An original publicity “Flyer” showing both T.T and Badminton use

Building Reg’s problems At the very start - before the Dome was built - there were problems with the Building Regulations! According to Ipswich Borough Council’s interpretation, all buildings have walls and a roof. In their eyes there was no other type of building! But a dome (depending upon how you see things) has either both or neither. Does it have a roof that comes to ground level, or a wall that goes up to the apex? This was a conundrum for the local Building Inspectors, who opted to call the bottom 2 metres “wall”, and the rest “roof”, when they’re really a continuous surface. That accounts for the appearance of having walls when you’re inside the building, but only roof on the outside.



We’ve only got “roof” on the outside but there are “walls” on the inside

There were also problems in insuring the place. A wooden building covered with highly flammable (bitumen) felt surface is not really a good fire insurance risk – particularly when it is immediately adjacent another similar (larger) building of the same construction, and a row of houses. By the time the Fire Brigade arrive there will be very little of anything left!

But Britannia had a member in the Insurance Industry (Norwich Union) who negotiated a very favourable premium – problem solved.

Problems with using the building

Problem No 1 With a large amount of headroom all the heat moves to the ceiling leaving the playing area a rather “chilly” place in cold weather.

Problem No 2 The building being a “dome” has a very large surface area, a large proportion of which always faces the sun. Being black in colour makes it an ideal heat collector/sink, making the building very hot during the summer and cold in winter
(Nothing has changed in these respects. Britannia is still either too hot or too cold)

Problem No 3 When the building first came into operation and was configured for only a single table in the centre, because the building was a “Dome” the playing surface was effectively at the “foci” of a parabolic reflector and the sounds of the ball could be heard twice. The process was for the ball to hit the table with its normal “crack”: for this sound to travel to the wooden internal surface of the building, and then to be “bounced” back to the player. Not a problem you might think, except that sound takes time to travel. The result was that each time the ball made contact with the table it made the usual “crack” followed a fraction of a second later by another “crack” as the sound bounced back. (Hans Fleck)
Not really “Ping-pong” but PING – ping, PONG – pong. Rather confusing!

To engineers it is quite simple. Any surface that is a concave shape will reflect sound to same point (or points) within its perimeter. It’s known as a parabolic reflector (the reflector of a torch, or RADAR dish are examples). In the case of the new building it was an almost perfect shape to reflect the sound back toward the players, giving the building its own built-in echo system. It’s not a new phenomenon – just new to Table Tennis.

Once the problem was identified the answer was simple – cover the inside of the “dome” with sound absorbent tiles, and while you’re doing it: put in a bit of polystyrene insulation to help keep us warm. Both of which are still in place!

We run our own “League”

BTTC “Summer-League” started in 1970’s to increase the club’s income and at that time consists of 3 divisions of 6 teams, running between late May and late August. Although it started off using the standard “League” format; with the decline in participants in the mid 1990’s it was changed to something vastly different - see score sheet below.

Home Team		Score	AwayTeam		Score
A			X		
B			Y		
C			Z		

RESULTS

AB v XY									
C v Z									
A v Y									
B v X									
AC v YZ									
A v X									
B v Z									
C v Y									
BC v XZ									

Place completed score card in display at back of "Forms" table

Since about 2000 it has been handicapped allowing juniors to compete against adults in a competitive setting for the first time.

It still raises funds for the club but has now become more of a "fun" thing

The Building has been changed Originally the entrance to the building and social area were at the front – facing the road where you see the porch in the photo: but this meant that there was a lot of unusable space inside; so in the mid 1980's the internal "foyer" at the front of the building was removed, the playing area moved forward, and the building "turned-round" internally, making the former emergency exit (facing the school playground - now the school's car park) the main entrance. This was when the separation of the courts was changed to suspended netting rather than the standard "Ball-screens (You can see the netting in the photo on page 7)

Silver jubilee In 1995 when the building reached its 25 anniversary the Sec of the time (Paul Packwood) thought that a celebration was in order, and he invited both past and current playing members to a "do".

News of the event got to the local Press and for **one day only** the club became a news-worthy celebrity!



Press cutting from the 25 years celebrations at the Dome

Top 12 and 16 tournaments It was during 1998 that our Club Captain of the time (Andy Doshier) decided to invite all the best players from the East Anglia to come to Britannia to compete for cash prizes, and the “Top 16” competition was born. These competitions were different to anything Britannia had ever done before in that all the entrance monies were recycled as prizes, with the club putting in an additional sum (£100 - first year at least) to make it more attractive. It was a great success and ran until recently



Top 12			East Anglian Top 16		
YEAR	WINNER	RUNNER UP	YEAR	WINNER	RUNNER UP
1999 - 00	Andrew Doshier	Richard Hutchinson	1998 - 99	Brooke Zhen Shea	Ian Mclean
2000 - 01	Richard Hutchinson	Andrew Doshier	1999 - 00	Andy Wignall	Dave Cole
2001 - 02	Andrew Warner	Richard Hutchinson	2000 - 01	Andy Wignall	Andrew Doshier
2002 - 03	Fred Dove	Andrew Warner	2001 - 02	Martin Gray	Dave Gattis
2003 - 04	Fred Dove	Andrew Warner	2002 - 03	Dave Gattis	Paul Cicchelli
2004 - 05	Not Played	Not Played	2003 - 04	Dave Atkinson	Dave Cole
2005 - 06	Ryan Collins	Wayne Shaw	2004 - 05	Not Played	Not Played
2006 - 07	Andrew Warner	Ryan Collins	2005 - 06	Ian Mclean	Andy Wignall
2007 - 08	Richard Hutchinson	Jake Collins	2006 - 07	Adam Giggly	Jake Collins
2008 - 09	Ryan Collins	Andrew Warner	2007 - 08	Jake Collins	Ryan Collins
2009 - 10	Andrew Warner	Ryan Collins	2008 - 09	Martin Gray	Matt Spiro
2010 - 11	Ryan Collins	Gary Young	2009 - 10	Neil Charles	Ryan Collins
2011 - 12	Ryan Collins	Tony West	2010 - 11	Jake Collins	Ryan Collins
2012 - 13	Ryan Collins	Tony West	2011 - 12	Lauren Spink	Neil Charles
2013 - 14	Jake Collins	Paul Broxton	2012 - 13	Ryan Collins	Steve Joslin
2014 - 15	Jake Collins	Andrew Warner	2013 - 14	Lauren Charles	Ryan Collins
2015 - 16	Ryan Collins	Andrew Warner	2014 - 15	Jake Collins	Neil Charles
2016 - 17	Ryan Collins	Andrew Warner	2015 - 16	Lauren Charles	Jake Collins
2017 - 18	Andrew Warner	Richard Hutchinson	2016 - 17	Andrew Hawes	Neil Charles
2018 - 19			2017 - 18	Steven Gray	Gary Young
2019 - 20			2018 - 19		
2020 - 21			2019 - 20		
2021 - 22			2020 - 21		
2022 - 23			2021 - 22		
2023 - 24			2022 - 23		
2024 - 25			2023 - 24		
			2024 - 25		

Top 12 and 16 Honours Board

The following year he ran an additional competition inviting the top 12 players from the local Leagues to compete. In 2018 -19 however there was a change in Club Management thinking and the funding of these events changed

The more recent problems

In the late 1990's our lease on the site expired and under the terms of this Lease the building had to be surrendered to the Lessee (Ipswich Boro Council, (The documents were signed by the then Chairman Les Glanfield and actually surrendered on 10 Aug 1998).

The club faced a dilemma.

We could either take on a new site lease costing almost ten times that of the original (that's inflation for you) and for it be inflation linked; or look for a new home.

Either way there were problems! The obvious one was finding somewhere to go, or - if we stayed on the site - how to pay the increased costs. Neither option looked promising.

After the surrender of the Lease the building came under the control of Thurleston High School and fortunately our good relationship with the School's Principal (Mr Lawrence) came to our rescue. He did not really have much use for the building since he already had a large sports hall on site, but he could use our Dome for Drama classes, and the money we might pay in rent would be useful.

After lengthy negotiations a deal was struck! We could stay in the building and rent it from the school (Borough Council called it Licence) for the sum of £4000 per year.

	<u>are not to be parked on the verge in front of the school.</u>
Licence Fee:	£4,000 (four thousand pounds) per annum payable termly in advance, based on the extent of use above. The licence fee to be reviewed annually on 1 September in each year.
Term:	The licence will commence on 1 September 1998 and continue until terminated by either party serving on the other 12 months written notice.
Maintenance:	The licensee is to reinstate any damage caused by its use. The licensee is to put

Extract from the agreement (Licence) negotiated in 1998 with Thurleston High School for £4000 per year

This brought some unexpected benefits: (Values are in 1994 terms)

- 1 We no longer needed to insure the building (**Saving £1400**) since it was now part of the school's assets and came under their overall insurance umbrella, a saving of several hundred pounds each year. (The cost was very high because the building is made of wood with a felt roof, both of which are highly flammable. It is also very close to the school's Sports Hall - a similar wooden building: and several houses)
- 2 There were no Business Rates to pay (**Saving £420**) since schools don't have to pay these locally.
- 3 We had no Water or Electricity bills to pay (**Saving 1300**).
- 4 We had no ground-rent to pay (**Saving £160 per year**)
- 5 Repairs, well; we did not have to pay these either because BTTC no longer owned the building. Nothing was our problem any longer, other than the specialised lighting and a bit of minor maintenance.

1994/5			
<u>INCOME</u>		<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	
SUBS. & REG.	2700.00	REG. & AFFLI.	800.00
HIRE OF DOME	750.00	ADMIN.	200.00
PRIVATE PRACTICE	100.00	GROUND RENT	160.00
SOCIAL MEMBERSHIP	300.00	BUSINESS RATES	420.00
SOCIAL THURS/SUN.	100.00	WATER RATES	300.00
SUMMER LEAGUE	300.00	ELECTRICITY	1000.00
CHAMPIONSHIPS	100.00	INSURANCE	1400.00
		REPAIRS & EQUIP.	100.00
	4350.00		4380.00

Extract from the 1994 Treasurer's Report showing the out-goings at that time.
Around £10,000 in 2023 values.

These values are not exactly accurate but they are the best information available from the Treasurers Report presented at the 1994 AGM. Allowing for the inflation between 94 and '98 I suspect that the value would be at least 20% higher than shown above making the deal worth closer to £5000. (The 2023 value of our savings is around £10,000)

Not a bad deal!

There were a couple of drawbacks – the club could not use the building when the school needed it, which is understandable. Initially this did not prove to be a problem since principally we needed it during the evenings and the school during the day. Further negotiations allowed us to use it some mornings each week other than at exam-times for our Vet's club. So for about four weeks each year (exam time) we had to look elsewhere for a daytime venue .

The arrangement however soon started to sour. The school needed the building more and more during the day as time went on until it reached the point where their use of it – mainly for drama - precluded us using it much during the day. This reduced the club's income considerably since the Vets by now generated a lot of our income. The Club Sec of the time (Paul Packwood) arranged a meeting with the School's Principal (Mr Lawrence) to explain that although we were still able to use the building during the evenings it was our day time use that kept the club afloat, and in November 2000- as an act of goodwill - Mr Lawrence reduced our annual rental to £2500

10 November 2000

Dear Mr Sparkes

USE OF SPORTS DOME BY BRITANNIA TABLE TENNIS CLUB

Following our meeting earlier this week, I can now confirm the following:

The base rent for the table tennis dome for use during the evenings, at weekends and during the school holidays to be set at £2500 per year. This is subject to annual review in September 2001.

Reduction of our rental to £2500 in 2000

Our own News-sheet

In the late 1990's the club was encouraged to produce its own internal news-sheet. The committee thought this was a good idea and the first edition of "Britannia News" appeared.



Because no one in BTTC had ever produced anything like this before the author had missed two vital points – what do you put in it: and who's going to read it? It was published monthly, but wasn't a success and after only a few issues it died - mainly because there wasn't sufficient news to sustain it, and very few people actually read it anyway.

We've got a Veterans Club

Our Vets club started out in 1993 -4 almost by accident! A small number of retired T.T. players (no more than 5 or 6) decided to get together in the local Whitton Community Sports Centre on Wednesdays mornings to play T.T. as a social sport. When the Centre raised their charges someone suggested that it be moved to Britannia's Dome which was about half a mile away, and our Vets club was born.

To help pay for the lights etc the charge was set voluntarily the same as the Sports Centre at £1 per player per session, and there was no need to join the club – just a social gathering. Originally they continued to meet only on Wednesdays, but word soon spread and within the next year or so it was necessary to increase this to two mornings (Wed and Fri) – but only during the winter months, and for a couple of years when the summer time attendances reduced, play returned to Wednesdays only. After this first two- three years however popularity increased and we had grown sufficiently to extend the Vets to three mornings per week – but again only during the winter months.

This process worked very nicely for the club since the Vets used the same equipment as the league players making the only costs the lighting and heating, which was far less than the income the Vets generated.

When the school decided to take up more of the options built into our agreements preventing our daytime use almost entirely our Vets club almost came to an end

Fortunately one of our members had a contact at the local YMCA and for a time during 2000 the Vets moved to the YMCA in Norwich Road. Ipswich

The move to YMCA brought its own problems.

The only space suitable for a number of T.T. Tables is a recreational/sports hall on the first floor and there are no lifts. Each table had to be manhandled up a flight of stairs. Now: a modern T.T table weighs around 100Kg, and getting one up a narrow flight of stairs is a feat in its self.

The YMCA had the answer! Some very strong “chaps” who were only too pleased to do something useful and the tables arrived upstairs with only the loss of some paint here and there to show for their experience

This was not however the whole answer, being in two venues made us short of tables at both the YMCA and the Dome, so some were borrowed from other clubs until we could “sort-it-out”

This venue, although available, was not very suitable. The lighting was not designed for T.T, the floor could become slippery and car parking was a problem.

So we looked for a new longer-term venue.

Dome Equipment	91.85	1135
Top '16'	100	100
Club Newsletter	9.25	10
British League	421.65	315.75
Club Championships	6.91	17.56
Donation I and D TTI	10	10
Christmas Boxes	14.06	9.99
Hire YMCA	332.5	-----
Hire Cricket Centre	792.02	2065
First Aid Equipment	12.99	1.8

Extract from the 2001 Treasurers Report showing that we paid £325.50 for the part-year the Vets were at YMCA. The remainder of the period they had moved the Cricket-Centre

Moving to the Cricket Centre

The answer came later in 2000 – an allegiance with a local privately owned Sports Centre known at that time as “The Cricket Centre” (C-C) in Henley Road, who had little use for their building during the mornings which was when the Vets needed it: and in Sept of that year the club “split” into using two venues as a permanent feature. First however we decided to “give it a try” so the Sec of that time hired a suitable trailer from the trailer company in Dales Road and- using his pick-up truck - took a number of tables to the C-C as an experiment. As a venue it wasn’t ideal, but it was permanent (we thought) and - after overcoming some of the problems – useable.

The building was designed as 3 cricket courts which were separated with 75mm mesh netting. Now that size of mesh doesn’t stop 40mm TT balls too well, so a club member made some screens about a metre high from some of the modern “plastic” tarpaulin material which made a major difference (you can see them in the photo on Page 19)

The C-C management agreed to store the tables in a lockable storage cupboard as part of the deal, but how do you get them in and out of there twice a week. This didn’t prove insurmountable because the on-site manageress said that her staff would do it for an agreed sum. Net inclusive costs to Britannia £25 per session. Club funds at that time were not particularly high so the charge per session was raised from £1:00 to £1:50

Although this move overcame the immediate problem it made others worse. The Vets were expanding rapidly and we were now in two venues each of which needed a 4 or more tables, and the club didn’t own that many: but where can you get more tables quickly **without actually having to pay for them?**

The answer was twofold,

1 - Repair some of the tables laying about in various club venues but unused because of superficial damage; and several telephone calls later we had a very strange collection of equipment ending up with a mixture manufactured by Donic, Ketler, Jacobs, Butterfly, a single aging “Hopgoods “ and one made totally of spare parts, being used for next few months.

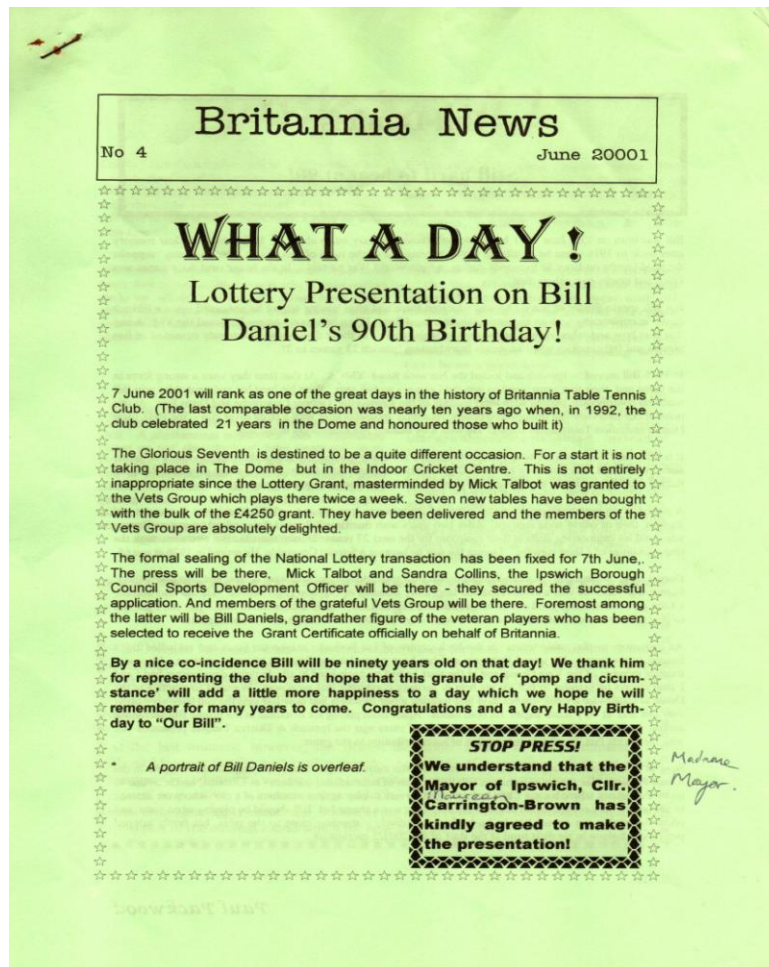
2 Try the lottery – they seem to be giving money away?

The Sec of the time (Mick Talbot) made a case to the Lottery Small Awards Committee, and in March 2001 BTTC was awarded the sum of £4250 to purchase new equipment.

The Grant/award certificate was formally presented to the clubs oldest member (Bill Daniels – then 90) by the Mayoress of Ipswich on 7th June that year

The Lottery Small wards purchased us some new equipment





BTTC
News sheet
covering
the event

Now – Ping-pong tables don’t grow on trees so it took a while to get prices from dealers, buy the equipment and then for it to be sent from a supplier

Using this new lottery funding the club was able to purchase the 7 tables needed at the Cricket centre and then – because purchasing several tables in one transaction makes them a lot less expensive – to acquire another three for use at the Dome at a much reduced rate.

Even buying new tables creates a problem.

The new equipment – all ten tables – arrived unexpectedly one morning directly from the manufacturers in Germany, on a German Registered lorry, with a driver who couldn’t speak English. As we couldn’t speak German the process of reversing his enormous lorry through the Cricket Centre’s narrow entrance and then unloading it by hand was quite interesting. Eventually all the tables were removed from the lorry (Can’t really claim it to be unloaded) and club members moved them down the loading ramp through the awkward doorways into the C-C where they were stored - along with the bottles/crates - in the lockable “Beer-store”. Next day they used a member’s pick-up to transport three of them to the Dome, about half a mile away.

We now had the equipment but not the Vets membership to warrant it,

Not a problem we had foreseen, so a publicity campaign started. The first venture was to put notices in the local free community newspaper. If we claimed it was a “Notice” they didn’t charge anything, but if they saw it as advertising it would cost us. A visit to see the Editor at the local Free Newspaper soon taught us what words to use and which to avoid; and we were away. We also agreed that the notice need not be inserted on any particular paper, on any

specific dates and need not be any particular size. So they used it to fill any space that they had available in any one of the multiple papers they produced. A nice “win-win” situation

**Do you remember
enjoying a game of
Table Tennis?**

The “Social” Club at Britannia T.T. Club is open between 10.00 am and Noon three mornings each week to anyone wishing to play Table Tennis to keep-fit or for fun.

No need to join the club, just bring your “bat” along to any of our meetings and enjoy yourself for a while.

It doesn't matter if you haven't played recently - you'll be surprised at how quickly you can get it going again.

Like to give it a try?

Contact Mick Talbot on 01473 828145 for further information.

Typical publicity item used in local community news papers whilst at the Cricket Centre

This was the breakthrough - eventually increasing the number attending the Vets regularly to 30 or so players

Another venture was to produce a small “Welcome” booklet for all new club members – mainly those joining the “Vets”.

Welcome to Britannia

Britannia is one of the Premier T.T clubs in East Anglia.

The club has achieved Sport England “Club Mark” Registration, is affiliated to Table Tennis England. (T.T.E) and is registered by them as The “Premier-Club” for the Ipswich area .

We are members of the Ipswich and District T.T. League and a large proportion of our members play in the Ipswich League on a regular basis, making us the largest and most active club in the Ipswich area. Currently the club has two TTE Registered Coaches and a number of teams of juniors in the TTE National Junior Leagues

Whether you want to play T.T. as a competitive sport at any level, or for fun, we are able to provide you with the facilities you need.

First page of the BTTC “Welcome” Booklet of 2001

The booklet didn't last very long however; again - no one bothered to read it!



*The new tables in use by
the Vets club at the Cricket
Centre.
(Plastic screens can be
clearly seen)*

We get locked out The Vets club (Not the club generally which still played at the Dome) steadily increased to 30+ regular attendees, and was at the Cricket Centre for the next 10 years, until one morning in 2011 those attending found the building closed. There had been some sort of Safety Inspection by HSE and Fire Authority over the weekend and they had issued an immediate closure notice.

Part of the club was now again homeless with all their equipment “trapped” in a building where the liquidators were about to move in. After some negotiation, the building owners/operators (whom we found very cooperative) allowed us to go into the building and retrieve our equipment before the liquidators got their hands on them.

We had recovered one awkward situation only to create another.

Where can you store 7 additional T.T Tables long term without paying anything?

The answer was to rearrange the Dome a bit and take them there. Thus for several years the club had fourteen tables in the Dome but only use for six or seven. They couldn't be sold because if we ever did get a larger “home” they would be needed

Too many members Britannia was now back totally in the Dome with a Vets club membership which was far larger than could be accommodated in the building, We did open a new session on Thursday afternoons, but this did not make much difference, leaving us with no option but to curtail our activities and allow the club to shrink to a more manageable size. (I don't think many clubs have had to deal with making themselves smaller)

Another complication The situation was complicated by this coinciding with the time when the Education Authority was “feeling the financial pinch” as their income was cut-back. They had just moved another school on to the Thurleston site and now had ample sports facilities but they could not really afford to maintain their own buildings let alone one (The Dome) which was now at the end of its working life for which they had little use. The club now faced another dilemma! Either watch our venue deteriorate rapidly until condemned as unsafe; or take on the minor maintenance ourselves.

The club opted for the latter. The main problem revolves around keeping the water out, and a member with some access equipment took on the task of sealing the roof as best as he could (at low levels at least) to keep our home going. The school could no longer afford to replace the lighting, so this was also included in the informal arrangement, and all the lights suddenly became the club's responsibility.

The management structure has been changed In 2001 the Club Sec (Paul Packwood) decided that the management process of 10 plus committee members making decisions was unwieldy and difficult to deal with (there never seemed to be any consensus on things anyway), so the system was changed to there being a 4 person Executive Committee (Chair, Sec, Treasurer and Club Captain) who would make all the day-to-day decisions, and that there would be a referenda if anything earth-shattering were to come about. An alteration was made to the Club's Rules (Britannia Code) to incorporate the new structure and a note added which said that any member could attend any meetings if they saw a need, which gave everyone the opportunity to have an input into management of the club. This system still works to this day, most members don't even realise it has ever been any different

Another cloud appears.

In 2005-6 the education authority were in the process of dealing with their cash shortfall by combining schools to release other sites which they could then sell-off as building land, and suddenly we were faced with the problem this created.

As part of the new arrangements S.C.C intended to move one of these schools onto the Thurleston site and demolish our building to create an access to the new car park planned for some vacant land at the rear of the Dome

Action had to be quick and effective!

The Club Sec of the time both objected to the planning application on behalf of the Club, and raised our dilemma with anyone he thought might lend a sympathetic ear. He contacted Sport England, ETTA (Now Table Tennis England), the local M.P, Suffolk Table Tennis Association, Ipswich Borough Council (and their local Councillors), and Ipswich and Dist League. With a single exception they all objected on the basis of loss of a local amenity to create a car park for which there seemed little demand. The non-objector was – surprisingly - Ipswich and District League. We were told that they did discuss the situation at a committee meeting but did nothing constructive that we know of.

Finally the County Architect conceded to the multitude of objectors (and probably the politics) and routed the access road round the T.T building, where it remains today.



Access to the Car Park was routed rather awkwardly round the Dome (on the left) after a number of organisations objected

More hopes appear!

In 2007 a London based company called “Strategic Leisure” did a survey of all the Sports Clubs in Suffolk for Sport England, and – after compiling and sending to them a report on our plight, BTTC came out very well indeed. **“Replacement facilities required”** *their report said!*

Ipswich • Britannia Table Tennis Club – need replacement facilities • Lack of facilities for cycling and ice skating • Ipswich Hockey Club require additional STP pitch provision • Feasibility study recently carried out for potential 50m swimming pool • Indoor facility required with spectator facilities for karate, netball and basketball

Extract from 2008 Strategic Leisure/Sport England Survey

A similar exercise came about a couple of years later when both Suffolk County and Ipswich Borough Councils decided that they ought to follow suite with their own surveys, but all ended in the same conclusion. Lots of encouraging words and meetings, but nothing else!

Clubmark In 2008-9 we were encouraged to get Sport England “Clubmark” Registration. We were told that there were all sorts of advantages and Britannia was one of the first T.T clubs in East Anglia to achieve it. In 2023 we still have C.M Reg’n, but have yet to see any of the promised advantages!

More hopes At around the same time there was a new ray of hope when the Government launched their new “Schools for the Future” (SFF) programme. This involved the demolition and re-creation of much of the present school to include facilities which could be used by clubs such as Britannia. The Project Manager (Mr Houghton) wanted BTTC to stay on the site to act as an “anchor” to encourage more clubs to make use of the schools new facilities. Grand plans were drawn and the future looked rosy again.

Then in 2010 there came about a change in Government and funding for the SFF Project was withdrawn, leaving the club with a rather different future.

Our Landlords become an Academy In 2012 the local Education Authority decided that it would involve its self in a new government initiative whereby schools could become Academies. This was OK, but where would it leave Britannia, who were resident on the school site. In due course a new Head was appointed to command the new organisation which meant the BTTC had lost a staunch alli.

This new system meant that the new Academy would have been responsible for our old building - which contains a lot of asbestos. They couldn’t afford to keep it, nor could they afford to demolish it, so it remained in the ownership of Suffolk County Council. However since the building did not appear (Note the terminology) to have separate metering for electricity or water etc the Academy remained responsible for all our services – which was a grand idea. Since then they have however discovered that we have our own Water meter and we now have to pay for our water supply.

Coaching Since the 1970’s the club always had part-time amateur coaches, but around 2015 we managed to acquire the services of a well known Coach (Aard Kwakkelstien) who now lived a few miles away. As a result of his efforts we have an increase in both juniors and our public perception generally, and now have juniors playing in several “National” Leagues and Competitions.

The 2023 Treasurers Report shows that our overall membership is slowly increasing (Adults as well as juniors) and now stands at about 175 paid up members.

A reward from the Boro Council In 2018 a more pressing cloud to present its self when the Treasurer received a bill for the payment of Council Tax of around £1400 per year, plus 3 years back-dated charges. (Ipswich Boro Council had just discovered that our building was no longer part of the school)

Research with one of our contacts however said that we ought to apply to become a “Community Asset Sports Club” (CASC)! BTTC met all the criteria, so if approved the Local Authority **would have to give us a minimum of 80% reduction in the Council Tax bill** to meet the recent government directive; which we thought a great idea.

When the Treasurer pursued this with Ipswich Borough Council he had a pleasant surprise.

The Council actually gave us a Concession of 100% reduction and waived the overdue charges – we had nothing to pay at all!

We’re still in the “Dome” and – at the moment - have only one dramatic concern. The building is now 25 or so years beyond its expected life span and is deteriorating rapidly. **It moving and we don’t know what to do about it!**



A hand through gap in the wall shows the building movement

There are rumours that we may be able to form an allegiance with another local sports club, perhaps become part of the redevelopment of a Council owned sports area or even become part of a privately owned sports development but these are I fear only “maybe’s” for the future

Our best hope is that perhaps there is a Fairy with a “Magic Wand” out there somewhere (T.T.E perhaps) who will appear one day to sort the future out for us!.