

# PRESERVE – UP



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## Rackets at Cheltenham College Through The Years



**1850s.** : In 1852 two rackets courts were constructed next to the Dining Hall (or the Chapel as it was then), along with an arrangement of fives courts, all of which were open air. The College Register details that there was an outlay of approximately £1200. There were further modifications such as back wall extensions and heating for the corridors made during the following year.

It wasn't until 1858 that an official singles competition took place. The original trophy held by the Champion was a miniature gold racquet which, in 1894, was put into the College Museum because a more substantial Cup was presented by an O.C. I fear that this first 'prize' gold racquet has long since departed College's trophy or archive collections.

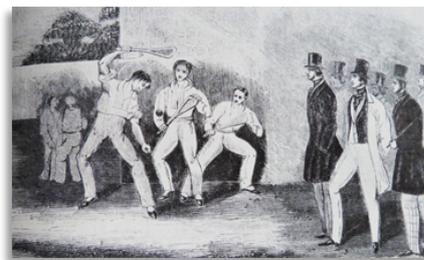
YEAR	PRO	COLLEGE PAIR	SINGLES CHAMPION
1858	None	Not recorded	F.R. Price
1859	"	"	T.L. Rolph

**1860s.** : In 1864 the covered rackets courts, either side of the Gymnasium, were completed. The cost was £5,120. (Architects were Messrs. Lockwood and Manson and the contractor was a Mr. Rainger). For the following six years, one assumes that the College had four rackets courts - a luxury indeed.

In 1868, with four schools, Cheltenham, Eton, Harrow and Charterhouse having established themselves as worthy competitors at the game, rackets competitions were contested on a national basis for the first time - College reached the final of the Public Schools' Doubles Tournament at Prince's Club, London in 1868, only to be beaten 4-3 by Eton. H.F. Latham, in his brief history of the championships as part of the souvenir brochure 'The Centenary of the Public Schools Rackets Championship 1868-1968' tells us that College had a match point in the fifth game! This was to be the last time that College reached a final at a Championship until, 120 years on, J.R. Boddington reached the final of the Renny Cup Level Singles in his first term of rackets. Much was expected of the Pair (Reid and Myers) at the Public Schools' Championships in 1869 after reaching the final in the previous year; tragically, however, J.J. Reid died in this year and College was represented at the Tournament by Myers and G.N. Wyatt. We lost in the first round to Eton, fairly easily, 4-0.

1860	None	Not recorded	G.M. Kennedy
1861	"	"	R. Garnett
1862	"	"	R.T. Reid
1863	"	"	J.(John) J. Reid
1864	"	"	J.W.B. Laurie
1865	"	"	R.O. Cotton
1866	"	"	W. Humphrys
1867	"	"	J.(James) J. Reid
1868	"	J.J. Reid & A.T. Myers *	J.(James) J. Reid
1869	"	A.T. Myers & G.N. Wyatt	A.T. Myers

**1870s.** : One of the original rackets courts was developed into The Pierson Museum in 1870, at a cost of £700. Shortly afterwards £200 was spent on one of the rackets courts' floors in the Pavilion (we don't know which one), in line with the new floor put down at Prince's Club in London. This was indeed an era or 'Playground' development; two Eton fives courts were constructed to the west end of the Pavilion in 1876 (£300), a Swimming Bath in 1879 (£8,418) and four Rugby fives courts in 1883 (£1,100), to name three, together with the part-time appointment of George Gray, a rackets professional, one of the many Grays who were responsible for the success of the game at this time, in terms of coaching and competitive playing as well as racket and ball manufacture.



However various letters to the editor of The Cheltonian appear during the late 1870s that suggest there was a growing concern for the future of rackets at College; numbers had dropped and despite some brilliant sportsmen taking the game up (E. de S.H. Browne, the Pakenhams and W.C. Tonge, all of whom spent two years or more in the Rugby XV or the Cricket XI), the depth of talent was questionable.

1870	George GRAY	H. Porter & G. Strachan	H. Porter
1871	"	T.G.T. McMicking & F. Kemble	T.G.T. McMicking
1872	"	F. Kemble & T.R. Pakenham	F. Kemble
1873	"	E. de S.H. Browne & T.R. Pakenham	E. de S.H. Browne
1874		E. de S.H. Browne & G.C. Pakenham	E. de S.H. Browne
1875		G.C. Pakenham &	G.C. Pakenham
1876		T. Earle & R.F. Wilson	T. Earle
1877		H.C. Wilson & E.D. Pickard-Cambridge	H.L. Gallwey
1878		W.C. Tonge & H.C. Wilson	W.C. Tonge
1879		W.C. Tonge & R.B. Muir	W.C. Tonge

**1880s.** :

1880		W.C. Tonge & H.St.J. Clowes	W.C. Tonge
1881			W. Parish
1882		N.C.B. Chamberlain & G.A. Clowes	N.C.B. Chamberlain
1883		E.M. Blair & L.H.E. Taylor	E.M. Blair
1884		A.L.S. Jackson & E.M. Blair	A.L.S. Jackson
1885		A.L.S. Jackson & E.G.G.T. Baines	A.L.S. Jackson
1886		C.H.H. Pitts & W. Banks-Wright	C.H.H. Pitts
1887		W. Banks-Wright & E.T. Heaven	W.L. Parker
1888			L.T. Bigg
1889		Hon. W.G. Thesiger & A.D. Saunderson	Hon. W.G. Thesiger

**1890s.** : In 1894, C.C.Turnbull Esq., (O.C.) donated the Silver Challenge Cup for the winner of the College singles and the miniature gold racquet that had hitherto been the trophy was placed in the Museum. Details of rackets matches that College played appeared in The Cheltonian, each of which were reported with great enthusiasm and promise - they also detailed how the College Pair were dutifully entertained to lunch by the Headmaster, home or away, before taking to the court!

The success of the 1896 Pair at Queen's (semi-final), was attributed, in no small way, to the shining example of College's new rackets professional, an ex-American champion named Albert Wright. Rackets began to have more and more generous coverage in The Cheltonian. After the Public Schools' Championship in this year, it was reported that, "...the improvement in the form shown by our Pair this year is in very great measure due to our splendid Racquets Professional, Albert Wright; as long as we have him here at the School, there ought

to be no fear of our form at Racquets falling off." He used to play an exhibition singles match with fellow pro's. at varying venues (Marlborough and Clifton) after the boys had played their fixture.

It is interesting to note that the pressures of Rugby Football among the rackets players was prevalent even then; S.F.R. Studd (Pair 1897,8,9) required an operation to a troublesome wrist and the desired replacement, F. Kershaw, simply found it impossible to play because of his other sporting duties. At the same time however, there was an unprecedented amount of fives being played - College, Rugby and Eton fives with 30 or so boys playing each.

A rather amusing observation this year was the 'Racquets Club Account'; 46 boys were playing the game each term at a charge of 5s. per term. Also listed, among other expenses, were: "Rackets and Gross of Balls for Pair - £2. 15s." and, "Two sponges and comb 1s." The total expense for the year was £31.00.

Refereeing at home fixtures in 1897 was carried out by a Mr. Hatterley-Smith.

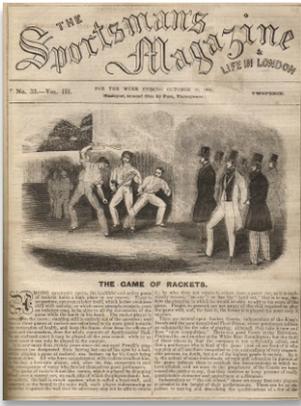
1890		A.D. Saunderson & Hon. W.G. Thesiger	A.D. Saunderson
1891			J.B. Campbell
1892		J.M. Quinton & R.S.V. Dyas	J.M. Quinton
1893		J.M. Quinton & B.H. Bignell	J.M. Quinton
1894		H.V.C. Turnbull & F.H. Bateman-Champain	H.V.C. Turnbull
1895		E.I.M. Barrett & F.H. Bateman-Champain	E.I.M. Barrett
1896	Albert WRIGHT	E.I.M. Barrett & A.B. Skinner	E.I.M. Barrett
1897	"	A.B. Skinner & S.F.R. Studd	A.B. Skinner
1898	"	D.G.W. Fry & S.F.R. Studd	D.G.W. Fry
1899	"	S.F.R. Studd & A.P. Boone	S.F.R. Studd

#### 1900s. :

1900	"	A.P. Boone & G.F. Talbot	A.P. Boone
1901		G.F. Talbot & T. Bouch	G.F. Talbot
1902		W.G. Harington & P.D'A. Banks	W.G. Harington
1903		V.F. Samuelson & E.B. Maxwell	V.F. Samuelson
1904		A.G.N. Belfield & A.L.E. Nixon	A.G.N. Belfield
1905		A.L.E. Nixon & A.G.N. Belfield	A.L.E. Nixon
1906		A.L.E. Nixon & C.J.V. Deane-Drake	A.L.E. Nixon
1907		A.L.E. Nixon & C. Parker	A.L.E. Nixon
1908		F.F.J. Ayrton & H.W. Brown	F.F.J. Ayrton
1909			

1910s. : There were no College representations at Queen's Club during the war years and understandably rackets took rather a 'back-seat' in terms of coverage in both the Register and The Cheltonian.

1910		B.J.A. Fawcett & S.R. Cooke	B.J.A. Fawcett
1911		S.R. Cooke & G.L. Reid	S.R. Cooke
1912		G.L. Reid & J.C.M. Hunt	G.L. Reid
1913		I.P. Campbell & J.C.M. Hunt	I.P. Campbell
1914		I.P. Campbell & H.H.M. Fraser	I.P. Campbell
1915		J.B. Smith & J.A.S. Jackson	J.B. Smith
1916		J.B. Smith & J.A.S. Jackson	J.B. Smith
1917		J.A.S. Jackson & L.F. Hancock	J.A.S. Jackson
1918		I.J. Kiljour & E.J. Pye-Smith	I.J. Kiljour
1919		E.J. Pye-Smith & G.R. Neale	E.J. Pye-Smith



**1920s.** :Joining College for just 3 years in 1921 was K.S. Duleepsinhji, probably the greatest and most widely known rackets player in College’s history. A quick glance at any number of College’s sporting records can immediately tell one of his cricketing success primarily, but also his hockey and rackets. In 1922, Duleepsinhji, along with A.L.S. Jackson, another outstanding cricketer and Captain of the XI, won every School fixture, and in the following year, this time with C.T.B. Leigh, College reached the semi finals at Queen’s, losing 4-2 to Radley - really and truly our best record to date. The great D.S. Milford, an Old Rugbean who was later to become World Champion between 1937 and 1947, recalled in the above-mentioned centenary brochure, “Whether it was a regular occurrence I can’t remember but I do know that on at least one occasion after a school match there was also a singles match between the first strings. I remember going to Cheltenham (the one court not recovered, alas!, after the war) and losing the first game to 0 or 1 to K.S. Duleepsinhji and without playing particularly badly either.

Fortunately he failed to keep it up!” Two of College’s most famous first string’s racquets remained as an exhibit in the Pavilion until they were transferred to the newly re-opened rackets court in 1988.

For whatever reason, the entry of W.R.A. Fetherstonhaugh (College Pair 1929-30) into the College Register (Sept. 1926) is, in fact, the last time that College ‘Racquet Pair’ status was detailed, just as H.N.E. Alston’s Singles success was the last ‘Racquet Champion’ entry detailed (1927). Thereafter it appears that such an achievement was either not worthy of mention or College ceased playing any School matches and therefore no record was kept, although it would appear odd that the ‘Racquet Champion’ tournament wasn’t in fact played. As these omissions coincided with a revised fourth edition of the College Register, one assumes that they were merely a result of a space-saving exercise, as this document was now attempting to list over one hundred years’ worth of Cheltonians. (A. Reincke’s appearance in the College Pair is in fact later than Fetherstonhaugh’s, but he had been a member of College for 7 years - presumably through the Junior as well - and his entry into the Register was May 1926.)

It is worth pointing out that in October 1928 four squash rackets courts were opened in College Road, named the H.V. Page (O.C. 1875-80) Memorial, (a Housemaster at College who had also been responsible for auditing, amongst others, the Rackets account), and, just as other schools discovered at that time, College and its rackets had to compete not only with the increasingly expansive major sports, but with this novel, flexible and less expensive sport. It is understood that the final demise of rackets at College was due, in part, to the success of squash.

1920	E.J. Pye-Smith & W.A. Fotheringham	E.J. Pye Smith
1921	A.L.S. Jackson & K.S. Duleepsinhji	K.S. Duleepsinhji
1922	K.S. Duleepsinhji & A.L.S. Jackson	K.S. Duleepsinhji
1923	K.S. Duleepsinhji & C.T.B. Leigh	K.S. Duleepsinhji
1924	F.V. Van der Byl & M.S.C. Stephens	F.V. Van der Byl
1925	C.M.N. Baker & G.B. Raby	C.M.N. Baker
1926	C.M.N. Baker & H.N.E. Alston	C.M.N. Baker
1927	H.N.E. Alston & D.A.C. Page	H.N.E. Alston
1928	D.A.C. Page & R.J. Woollatt	Not recorded
1929	D.A.C. Page & W.R.A. Fetherstonhaugh	"

**1930s.** :During the 1930s, (the exact dates are not clear), there was a professional at College by the name of Claude J. Atherton who remained at College until the demise of the sport in 1939. An O.C., Col. David Swiney, who played a little rackets, remembers him as, “a very small man who seemed to move around the court effortlessly.” P.H. Gray, Professional at Rugby for some 30 years from 1937, includes Atherton in a list of professionals who had served their school for many years: in the same centenary brochure he remembers, “In those days (1930s) I was overawed by their (Atherton and other long-serving pro’s.) knowledge of and ability at the game. They lived and talked rackets, but always the overriding desire was to see that whatever happened good sportmanship prevailed. A display of bad manners was the most heinous crime; losing mattered less. The essence of their teaching was that rackets was a game to enjoy.” There are few details of his employment but he was certainly noted for his dotting service to College and his stringing of all rackets

(there remains an old wooden squash racket in the rackets court office which has his stringing 'logo' on the neck).

1930	W.R.A. Fetherstonhaugh & C.L.N. Anley	“
1931	C.L.N. Anley & A.H. Reincke	“
1932	C.L.N. Anley & A.H. Reincke	“
1933	A.H. Reincke & N.R. Seddon	“
1934	G. Seddon & C.R. Bax	“
1935	J.M. Pope & G.L. Reynolds	“
1936	J.M. Pope & G.L. Reynolds	“
1938	J.D.P. Weir & P.A.W. Allen	“
1939	P.B.C. Moore & E.S.L. Mason	“



**1939 onwards** : Closure of the rackets court. Indeed, with an interesting plural, the Register tells us; “Racquets were not played at the College after 1939.”

A few observations from the above 87 years of Rack(qu)ets: In 66 Public Schools’ Tournaments at either Prince’s, Lord’s or Queen’s, College was not represented on 7 occasions. We progressed to the second round a total of 11 times but made the third round on only 2 occasions - in 1896 and 1923. (The ‘success’ of the Pair in 1868 was possibly helped by the fact that only four pairs were competing.) Eight boys managed to achieve College Pair status

for 3 years, W.C. Tonge (1878-80), S.F.R. Studd (1897-99), E.J. Pye-Smith (1918-20), K.S. Duleepsinhji (1921-23), D.A.C. Page (1927-29), C.L.N. Anley (1930-32), A. Reincke (1931-33) and J.M. Pope (1935-37). A.L.E. Nixon however is the only Cheltonian to appear in the Pair for 4 years (1904-07) - a remarkable feat. He appears to have concentrated purely on rackets as he listed no other sporting achievements in the Register. He, along with W.C. Tonge and K.S. Duleepsinhji, share the unique distinction of being College Singles Racquets Champion for 3 years.

**1939-1988** : College moved to Shrewsbury School for the majority of the war. The courts were immediately requisitioned by the War Department. There is an entry in the College Register that details the conversion of the west Rackets court into a Museum in 1947; the gallery was then removed when the Gymnasium was reconstructed in 1950. Further development occurred in 1960 when the new Cricket Pavilion was constructed in this west court and the Museum was moved to the top of Old Junior. At the same time the Gymnasium was renovated once again. In the east court however, a very fragmented continuation of the game existed after the war for the next 15 years or so until, in the early sixties, a ‘garage door like’ hole was knocked through the front wall in order to use the it as a storage area for the Grounds Staff - it was then obviously unplayable. In 1974 it was taken over by the Works’ Dept. as a temporary base.

**1988 - present day** : Richard Morgan (Headmaster 1978-1990), a devoted supporter of the game, together with the more appreciative members of College Council, worked as hard as possible to re-open the east court, and, with financial aid from the Tennis and Rackets Association, saw their dream realised with the first ball being struck in the Spring of 1988 - the front wall having been repaired by London-based Cornwall Bros., and the original floor (possibly the one modified over one hundred years ago) left untouched. Tim Pearce mentions in his book ‘Then and Now’, a celebration of the centenary of Cheltenham College, that, “A wonderfully nostalgic development was the re-opening of the east rackets court, in 1988, which had been dormant for fifty years, and the appointment of Karl Cook as the rackets professional ... a project dear to Richard Morgan’s heart.” It remains one of the fastest and truest courts in the world. Ron Hughes, the retired Malvern Pro., introduced a handful of boys to the game before the appointment of Karl Cook in September 1988, a young Tennis and Rackets Professional trained at Clifton College and the Royal Leamington Spa Tennis Club, who could ensure that College would return to the competitive circuit after an absence of exactly 50 years.

The Tennis and Rackets Association donated the Dick Bridgeman Trophy for the winner of the College singles, as almost all signs of a rackets history, including any previously awarded trophies, had completely disappeared; and, at a later date, Charles Liverton, captain of rackets 1990-1991, donated the C.O.A.L. Plate as a prize for the junior singles competition. Also A.G. Cook, father of the newly appointed Pro., made, quite

appropriately as it transpired, an exquisite miniature gold racquet with a circular marble wall as a back drop, to be awarded to the winner of the Cheltenham Gold Racquet, a national tournament for evening club players, introduced by Richard Morgan to encourage players from every other court in the country to play at College and appreciate this new addition to rackets - it is a tournament that has proved a great success.

The court, and rackets at Cheltenham, certainly achieved full recognition when College hosted the British Professionals Championship in February 1991 as part of the School's 150th. anniversary celebrations. The small viewing gallery was overflowed and the success of the event was reported both locally and nationally - the tournament being won by the world number two Shannon Hazell, the Clifton College Professional, who was responsible for training Karl Cook whilst serving his apprenticeship at Clifton.

During the summer of 1991, the court required more repairs, again to the front wall, which was carried out by Arthur Cook, a member of the Marlborough College works department - time will obviously be of the essence in determining whether the work has been a success - as yet, however, there certainly have been no complaints.

The future therefore brightened; the game had been established with both College and in and around Cheltenham; we had achieved full recognition from other schools in fielding a commendable pair at all age groups and our evening Cotswolds Rackets Club hosted a very popular and entertaining singles and doubles weekend for the Cheltenham Gold Racquet. In 1992 College's U16 Pair reached the Colts Doubles' Final at Queen's - both W.B. Hale and T.J. Liverton had at least two more years at College - and, indeed, Liverton reached the final of the U16 Singles in December 1992 ... who knows how far one may be from a very first parade in the winners' enclosure?



The next couple of years saw some significant changes. With the evening club at a real strength - having secured the Henderson League Div. 2 title and winning the Clifton Boosters tournament - it was felt that the time was right to broaden horizons further. A group of eight players toured North America in April 1994. Boston, Chicago and Montreal were visited and the Cotswolds Club was by and large victorious. A report of the tour, compiled by Ron Brown, can be found in the 1994-1995 T&RA Annual Report. Denis Walsh looked after the assembled company well (in the Hilton) in Boston; Peter Dunn in Chicago and Tim and Tom Price in Montreal.

In many ways the tour acted as a swansong for Karl Cook as Pro., as Peter Wilkes (Headmaster 1990-1997), appointed him and Ruth to Housemaster of Leconfield from September 1994 and therefore, at a comparatively young age, was unable to continue as Pro. It was important, then, that the rackets was not forgotten and Karl Cook pushed hard for a replacement Pro. straightaway who may be able to offer other services elsewhere. Peter Ellis the long term Pro. at Haileybury and a good friend of Cook's mentioned that his son R.G.P. Ellis, of Foster Cup, Middlesex and Gloucestershire County Cricket fame, was looking for a History teaching post, possibly for just one year. Despite a somewhat restless career, Richard was appointed and instantly settled into the dual-role. Peter, his father, would string all the new rackets and Richard would drive to Haileybury once a week to collect them. He was quite capable of maintaining balls and carrying out repairs.

During this year (1994-1995), College's young cricket Pro., Mark Briers, ex-Worcestershire and Durham, got a taste for the game over the course of the Summer of 1994. He spotted the opportunity of a full-time job from September 1995 if he trained hard, and was soon placed at Rugby under the tutelage of Phil Rosser. Mark started, then, full-time at Cheltenham College in September 1995 and quickly gave the College impetus and built up probably its healthiest number of players to date. He and Karl Cook as master-in-charge formed quite an effective partnership: one eager to learn; the other reluctant to let go. It transpired that College would have to wait until 1996 before a trophy could be brought home: both Sam Fairbairn in the Renny Cup and Tom Hale and Steve Arnold in the Second Pairs' Competition succeeded.

YEAR	PRO	COLLEGE PAIR	SINGLES CHAMPION
1988	Karl COOK	J.J. Rooney & J.R. Boddington	J.R. Boddington
1989	"	J.J. Rooney & T.C. Riley	J.J. Rooney
1990	"	C.O.A. Liverton & T.C. Riley	C.O.A. Liverton
1991	"	C.O.A. Liverton & N.R. Houson	C.O.A. Liverton
1992	"	W.B. Hale & C.W.J. Barnsdale	W.B. Hale
1993	"	W.B. Hale & T.J. Liverton	W.B. Hale
1994	Richard ELLIS	T.J. Liverton & T.A.O. Hughes	T.J. Liverton
1995	Mark BRIERS	T.A.O. Hughes & T.N. Hale	S.H. Fairbairn
1996	"	T.A.O. Hughes & S.H. Fairbairn	T.A.O. Hughes
1997	"	S.H. Fairbairn & B.W.D. Hughes	S.H. Fairbairn
1998	"	B.W.D. Hughes & G.P. Tyndall	G.P. Tyndall
1999	"	G.P. Tyndall & M.J. Stout *	G.P. Tyndall *
2000	"	M.J. Stout & J. Stout **	J. Stout **
2001	"	J. Stout & A.J. Coldicott **	J. Stout **
2002	"	D.C. Hall & N.J. Abendanon	N.J. Abendanon

\* Public Schools' Championship Finalists  
 \*\*Public Schools' Championship Winners

\* Foster Cup Finalist  
 \*\* Foster Cup Winner

