

Part II: The flowering of tennis in Cheltenham, leading ladies & Renshaws

Chapter 6: Cheltenham College's early tennis connections – the old boys

Introduction

For the early years, histories of tournament lawn tennis tend to focus on the development of the All England Club in Wimbledon while paying homage to the Fitzwilliam Club in Dublin as both organiser of the second-ranking tournament of the times, and, at a time when Wimbledon restricted itself to just a men's singles event, as architect of the model national championships with singles and doubles events for both sexes¹. It took seven years for the All England Club to expand the nation's tennis showpiece to include a men's doubles and to emerge from its bachelor ways, but even in 1884 it still restricted women to just a singles competition. Virtually no mention is made of Cheltenham except as the town that the Renshaws left in 1879 en route to success and stardom in England's capital city. Yet in May 1882, in commenting on the final of the Fitzwilliam mixed doubles event, *The Freeman's Journal of Dublin* was willing to declare that William Renshaw's partner Miss Bradley "is the best lady player in the Cheltenham Club, which is the best club in England" (- the twins continued to compete as members of Cheltenham LTC after the Renshaw/Meara family moved to London²). Earlier it had made the less controversial statement that the famous Renshaw brothers "are not only the strongest pair ever seen in England, but either individually is much better than any other player on the other side of the Channel"³. The journal appeared to be proved wrong about Miss Bradley almost immediately when soon afterwards she was defeated by fellow club member Mary Abercrombie in the final of the women's singles, but as Bradley had won the singles at Cheltenham in April 1881 it was a fair judgment to make, and in any case it still left Cheltenham with the trophy on its mantelpiece. The Cheltenham club provided the winner of the men's singles All-Comers, the defending men's singles champion, both finalists for the women's singles, the defending champions for the men's doubles (who lost to an Irish pair in the challenge round), and the runners-up in the mixed doubles (who also lost to an Irish pair)⁴; there was no ladies' doubles but if there had been, another trophy would have made its way to Cheltenham.

It was hardly surprising that *Freeman's* should label Cheltenham LTC the best club in England. Two years later in 1884 when the All England Club had opened its doors to female competitors for the first time, Cheltenham made a clean sweep of the Wimbledon titles with William Renshaw winning the men's singles, the brothers winning the doubles, and Maud Watson beating her sister Lilian in the final of the women's singles; only Herbert Lawford spoilt the Cheltenham party by winning the men's All Comers (- Ernest Renshaw was defeated by Grinstead in the fourth round)⁵. The Cheltenham Looker-on of 26th July gently saluted the local club: "That both Championships should have been won by Cheltenham players – for the brothers Renshaw are old Cheltonians – speaks well for the art as practised in the Courts of

¹ The Fitzwilliam featured ladies' singles and mixed doubles from 1879 but not ladies doubles (Treacy 1927 p.11). An attempt was made for a ladies doubles event in 1880 but there were few entries and only one match was played (Field 29/5/1880 p.684); the idea was then dropped for lack of competitors until 1885 (Field 30/5/1885 p.715).

² For the three years that they played in the Oxford Doubles competition for club pairs - 1880 to 1882 - the Renshaws entered under the name of the Carlton/Maida Vale Club, but this was the exception (Field 15/5/1880 p.611, 14/5/1881 p.668, 10/6/1882 p.801)

³ *The Freeman's Journal* 29/5/1882 p.7, BNA

⁴ *The Field* 3/6/1882 p.741, BNA

⁵ *The Field* 19/7/1884 p.102 & 26/7/1884 p. 138

the Lawn Tennis Club, whether in the Montepellier, or in the Winter Gardens”⁶; understatement not triumphalism was then the English way. There was something special about Cheltenham’s tennis club in those early years and its history is worthy of attention.

If histories of the pioneer tennis years are inclined to place Wimbledon and the Fitzwilliam centre stage to the exclusion of most other clubs (perhaps conceding a nod in the direction of Prince’s of Belgravia), they also tend to attribute the rise of lawn tennis primarily to the increase in the leisure time of the upper classes and underplay the effects of changing attitudes at public schools, where physical exercise had assumed a new importance and head teachers were trumpeting the character-building virtues of ball games. Lawn tennis certainly found favour with the country-house set as a pleasant game to while away the hours in mixed company, but the tournament game was developed principally by public school old boys with serious intent. The development of tennis in Cheltenham illustrates both social and public school influences and also reflects the impact of some commercial considerations – in spa and resort towns sporting activities and events were important to trade⁷. Cheltenham College, a major boys’ public school, certainly gave sport a high priority and this may have been related to its status as a major provider of officers to the British Army. In 1883 the army’s commander-in-chief, the Duke of Cambridge, offered the opinion that no other school in the country “had done so much to prepare young men for the several branches of Her Majesty’s service”⁸ and he honoured the school by attending its June speech day to present the prizes. Speaking after the award of prizes, he commented on the advantages of including within a general education “special education” which took account of a pupil’s ultimate calling, and he complimented the school on its “wise division” into Classical, Military and Junior Departments⁹; he finished by commending the final words of the speech day programme – *Floreat Cheltonia* - to “deafening applause” from the young Collegians crammed at the back of the room. His visit was rounded off by a tour which took in the College grounds, the gym and the boarding house of Prince Louis Napoleon who was then a pupil¹⁰. Three years later when the Duke’s nephew Prince Francis of Teck was at the school and the Duke’s sister was presenting the prizes, the headmaster observed that at that time there were nine hundred old boys serving as officers in the Army – a striking proportion of the school’s alumni¹¹.

While Cheltenham College old boys played a much smaller pioneer role in the development of lawn tennis than those of Eton and Harrow, they were probably third in line and comfortably ahead of Rugby. The Reid brothers did their bit in feeding Herbert Lawford’s need for racket sports at university but then there were the Marshall cousins, the illustrious Renshaws, and the talented Ernest Browne, who was Ireland’s leading player for many years and competed in high level tournaments from around 1879 until 1991, achieving his greatest successes in Doubles events at the Fitzwilliam¹². Other local Cheltonians were stalwarts of

⁶ Cheltenham Looker-on 26/7/1884 p.473, BNA

⁷ When in 1885 the Exmouth tennis club announced the abandonment of its tournament for the year because of the sudden death of its Hon Secretary General Bartlett, the Exmouth tradesmen petitioned the tennis committee to merely postpone the event in order to avoid “the great injury which will be inflicted upon the town”; the committee replied that while regretting “the pecuniary loss to the trades people of Exmouth” they must hold firm to their decision (Devon & Exeter Daily Gazette 7/8/1885 p.3).

⁸ Gloucester Citizen 30/6/1883 p.4 etc.

⁹ Looker-on 30/6/1883 p.411

¹⁰ London Evening Standard 30/6/1883 p.3 & Cheltenham College register 1841 – 1910, Hunter, p.486. The Prince’s house was Teighmore. H.I.H. Prince Louis Joseph Jerome Paul Napoleon arrived at the school in April 1883 aged 18 and left that July, destined for service in European armies for some years.

¹¹ Looker-on 3/7/1886 p.431, & see 19/6/1886 p.399. Over 40 OC officers were killed on active service in South Africa 1899 – 1902 (CC register 1910 p.826-7).

¹² For example, in 1882 he won both Fitzwilliam doubles events. With P. Aungier he took the men’s doubles title, defeating the Renshaw twins in the challenge round in five sets, and with Miss Perry he won the mixed, beating Ernest Renshaw and Ella Ramsay in the second round and William and Marian Bradley

Cheltenham Lawn Tennis Club, whose tournaments dated from the very dawn of club tennis in 1875, and they played with the Renshaws as the twins took their first fledgling steps into the world of tournament tennis. One of them – Fortescue Willoughby Porter – must be the “F.W. Porter” who won through two rounds at Wimbledon in 1878 and would have given William an early taste of victory over a Wimbledon competitor when he lost to him in the club singles event of April 1879¹³.

The Marshall cousins

At the first public schools’ rackets championship at Prince’s Club in 1868 Cheltenham was represented by the partnership of James Reid and one Arthur Thomas Myers, while Old Cheltonian Robert Reid acted as school referee. The Cheltenham pair were tipped to win but they narrowly succumbed to Eton in the final so denying their school a unique place in rackets history. Myers’ mother was born Susan Marshall, a daughter of the great Leeds industrialist John Marshall (1765 – 1845)¹⁴, and his father was the first Perpetual Curate of St John’s Church in Keswick. The church had been built by Susan’s brother John, second son of the patriarch, and on its completion in 1838 the Reverend Frederic Myers took charge of the newly formed parish of St John’s, Keswick. He married Susan in 1842. Arthur Myers was one of three Marshall cousins who contributed to the success of the All England championships in its first few years, the other two being Julian Marshall and William Cecil Marshall. All three were linked to Keswick in varying degrees.

John Marshall junior was Lord of the manor of Castlerigg and a major landowner in the Lake District, like his father and brothers. He had five children and the youngest was Julian, born in 1836. Although Julian’s father had a large investment in Keswick property Julian probably had the least involvement with the town because his father died in the year of his birth and his widowed mother appears to have moved out a few years after. She nevertheless remained on Marshall territory in the vicinity of Leeds and after Harrow Julian entered the Marshall flax mill business. He laboured there for six years without enthusiasm before giving up the struggle around 1861 and moving south to pursue his interests in music and racket sports¹⁵. The third cousin, William, was the son of Susan’s brother Henry Cowper Marshall (John Marshall senior’s fourth son) who lived between a house close to Leeds called Weetwood Hall and a mansion he refurbished and extended on Derwent Island. William was sent to Cheltenham College in 1863, the same year as Arthur Myers, and both were day boys¹⁶, probably living together in Mrs Myers’ fine stone mansion within easy walking distance

in the final (also in five sets) (Field 27/5/1882 p.711 & 3/6/1882 p.741).

¹³ In 1878 Porter lost in four sets to L.R. Erskine, eventual runner-up to Hadow in the All Comers (Field 13/7/1878 p.53 & Looker-on 5/4/1879 p.216). See also CC register 1910 p.235 for FWP.

¹⁴ John Marshall (1765 – 1845) started working life as a linen merchant in the family business but then pioneered mechanised flax spinning in the locality of Leeds and made himself a fortune as a mill owner. His wealth at the time of his death is estimated at £2m. Active in politics, education and general good works, he was an MP for four years in his sixties and counted Thomas Carlyle and William Wordsworth among his friends. His wife was a childhood friend of Dorothy Wordsworth and he fell in love with the Lake District after honeymooning there in 1795. In 1815 he built a discrete mansion called Hallsteads by Ullswater and he invested heavily in land in the area. His later life came to be centred on the Lake District and his sons established themselves in large country houses in Keswick, Derwent Island and Patterdale and continued the family business (Source: mainly ODNB for John M 2013).

¹⁵ ODNB for Julian M Sept 2013. Apart from his interest in racket sports, Julian was an amateur musician and a collector of music manuscripts – a recognised connoisseur and historian of a high calibre. He was a published writer on both real tennis and the history of classical music.

¹⁶ CC register 1910 William p.271 (born Apr 1849, entry Sept 1863), Arthur p.261 (born Apr 1851, entry Jan 1863).

of the College (- Brandon House, Painswick Road)¹⁷. They were some fourteen years younger than Julian.

William, it has to be said, spent only about four terms at Cheltenham before moving on to Rugby at the age of fifteen¹⁸ and so he never played representative rackets for Cheltenham and had left school by the time Rugby entered the public school rackets championships in 1869¹⁹ (when Arthur again played for Cheltenham). Arthur and William were similar in age to Herbert Lawford but their racket sports careers were probably jump-started by their links to Julian. After public school they both progressed to Trinity College Cambridge, William in 1868 and Arthur in 1869²⁰. Trinity was the Cambridge college favoured by the Marshall family, probably because of its friendship with the Wordsworth family and a direct link by marriage. William Wordsworth's brother Christopher was master of Trinity from 1820 to 1841²¹ and the Wordsworths introduced the Marshalls to Christopher's successor at Trinity, William Whewell²². The cousins' aunt Cordelia Marshall was married to Whewell in October 1841, the month he was appointed master²³. At Trinity they were soon playing representative real tennis for the university and they consistently played in the Oxford University matches from 1870 to 1873²⁴. William was the stronger of the two and he won the singles three years running from 1870 to 1872. He also competed in the doubles for those years, partnering Arthur in 1870 and losing against John T Hartley and C.J. Ottaway, but then winning in 1871 and 1872 in combination with Alfred Hoare. In William's absence in 1873, Arthur won the doubles playing with Hoare but lost the singles.

After Cambridge both the cousins went into professional training. William entered articles to train as an architect and by 1876 he was in practice in London²⁵. In later years he was to design a number of real tennis courts, including one built for Cambridge University in 1890²⁶, and his real tennis speciality led to his recruitment by John Heathcote to write on court construction for the Badminton sports series in 1890²⁷. Arthur began his medical training probably a year or so after William entered the working world and he obtained his medical degree in 1881 at Cambridge, subsequently becoming a physician at St George's hospital, London²⁸. They were both novices in their professions when Julian Marshall, Charles Heathcote and Henry Jones drew up their blueprint for the first Wimbledon championships in 1877.

Were they both keen to support the new game of lawn tennis? William perhaps more than Arthur to judge from his longer involvement with the championships, but Julian was a

¹⁷William's older brother Stephen was also at CC as a day boy from 1857 to 1859 (CC register 1910 p.200) and was shown as resident with Susan Myers in the census of 1861 (ACU). Susan lived to a ripe old age in Cheltenham, passing away in 1896 still resident in Brandon House (Probate record 1897, ACU).

¹⁸ Rugby School register 1842 – 1874 p.247

¹⁹ Tennis & Rackets Association listing of the Public School winners, 2016

²⁰ Cambridge Alumni for ATM & WCM (ACU)

²¹ C Wordsworth Cambridge Alumni (ACU 2012)

²² ODNB for William Whewell 2020

²³ Cambridge Chronicle 23/10/1841 p.2 & Cambridge Alumni for W Whewell (ACU 2012). Whewell's tenure as master continued until his death in 1866. Cordelia – 1803 to 1855- was the third daughter of John Marshall of Hallsteads. "William Wordsworth wrote to his brother Christopher on 10th September 1844 during a five day visit to Hallsteads and says that he ...found the old people in dejected spirits - Mr Marshall afflicted by blindness, Mrs Marshall not well. The Whewells were there enjoying themselves as much as the sad circumstances could permit" (www.oldchurch.co.uk 2020).

²⁴ "Fifty Years of Sport at Oxford, Cambridge and Great Public Schools - Tennis", Croome 1913 p.17 & 18

²⁵ Historic England on listing for 12 Madingley Rd, Cambridge ("historicengland.org.uk/listing", 2020).

²⁶ The Burrell's Walk court. WCM Cambridge Alumni (ACU 2020) & records of Cambridge Real Tennis Club (janus.lib.cam.ac.uk 2020). See also WCM's obituary in West Sussex Gazette 3/2/1921 p.10 (BNA).

²⁷ Badminton Library, "Tennis", JM Heathcote, p.26 & see p.108

²⁸ Obituary, British Medical Journal 27 Jan. 1894 p.223

dominant character and any reluctance on their part may have counted for little in the face of pressure from a family elder. William added quality to the draw in 1877 and came through to the singles final where he lost to Spencer Gore in straight sets²⁹. He sat out 1878 but returned in 1879 to fall in the third round to the consistency of John Hartley, eventual champion (“the winner appears to be able to get to any ball however far it is placed from him, and his certainty of return was again very remarkable”)³⁰. His last appearance at Wimbledon was in 1880 when he lost in the first round to Walter Hansell, who was “unknown” as a tennis player but was an able footballer and achieved prominence as a member of the Old Carthusian team that won the FA cup in 1881³¹. William lent his services to the championships for the next two years as a steward³². Arthur Myers, who had the more demanding employment, entered the lists for the first time in 1878 and defeated Alexander Hadow in a fiercely contested match before yielding to younger brother Patrick’s greater skills in the next round³³. Patrick Hadow went on to become Champion that year, defeating Spencer Gore in the Challenge Round. Arthur nevertheless made his mark with Gore, who recorded that Arthur was the first player to attempt the “over-hand” service in that year and his innovative style of service was to be in general tournament use by 1881³⁴. Arthur competed again in 1879³⁵ but lost to the Irish player Charles Barry, who had given Vere Gould a good run for his money in the final of the first Fitzwilliam tournament that same year as well as being runner-up in the men’s doubles³⁶. Like Julian and William, Arthur was a member of the All England Club and in June 1879 the three cousins together made up half the club’s team for a match against Oxford University, Arthur partnering Julian³⁷. In the Cheltenham open tournament of October 1879 Arthur was listed as a member of the All England Club³⁸ but he probably also played with Cheltenham LTC when visiting his family in Cheltenham (as in January 1880 when “Mr Myers” partnered Miss Bradley to victory in a club mixed doubles tournament)³⁹. In the October tournament he came up against Vere Gould in the first round and *The Field* described their encounter as “almost the best fight of the week” as the Irish champion was initially unable to cope with Arthur’s serve: “Mr Myers was in wonderful form, and his hard overhand service at first almost beat his opponent. To return it, Mr “St Leger” had to stand several yards beyond the base line; but when once he got accustomed to it, his superior play told, and he won a fine match”. Arthur won the first set but lost the next two, going down 6-4 in the third⁴⁰.

Julian Marshall himself only competed at Wimbledon in its first year, when he was forty-one. He won two five set matches then lost to Charles Heathcote in straight sets⁴¹ and concluded that for the future his energies were better devoted to management; he took on the role of club secretary early in 1880⁴². The three Marshall cousins made very different

²⁹ “The Tennis Players”, T. Todd 1979, p.219 - 1877; p.221 – 1879; p.222 - 1880

³⁰ *Field* 12/7/1879 p.45

³¹ *Charterhouse Register* 1872 – 1900, pub. 1904, p.28 for WEH

³² *Field* 9/7/1881 p.68 & 15/7/1882 p.92

³³ Todd 1879 p.220. Playing for Harrow, Alexander had won the public schools doubles rackets championship in 1871 & 1872, so he was no mean sportsman; his brother Patrick won for Harrow in 1873 (*Tennis & Rackets Assoc’n* listing 2016, Harrow register for AAH p.341). Both brothers played in the school cricket eleven.

³⁴ *Badminton Library*, “Lawn Tennis”, Spencer W. Gore, p.289

³⁵ *Field* 12/7/1879 p.45

³⁶ *Field* 7/6/1879 p.681 & 14/6/1879 p.710 & 711

³⁷ *Field* 5/7/1879 p.19. William played with LR Erskine and Spencer Gore & F Durant were the third pair.

³⁸ *Field* 11/10/1879 p.493

³⁹ *Looker-on* 10/1/1880 p.24

⁴⁰ *Field* 11/10/1879 p.493 & *Looker-on* 11/10/1879 p.648

⁴¹ Todd 1879 p.219

⁴² *Badminton* p.151 etc. He was born on 24/6/1836 (baptism record ACU).

contributions to the early success of the All England championships but all three drew on a background in real tennis.

The Renshaw twins

The Renshaw twins came from a different sporting stable although their family's considerable wealth had the same industrial source. Their father James Renshaw was a flax spinner by trade, based in the Manchester area, who sadly died at his home in Higher Broughton in September 1860 some three and a half months before their birth⁴³. Ellen, their mother, widowed in her early twenties with a baby daughter aged just under one⁴⁴, chose Leamington Spa for their birthplace and visited the town soon after her husband's death accompanied by close family⁴⁵. History is silent on her motives but the location may have been chosen to suit the wider family, gathering around her in support. In November two of Ellen's older sisters – Mary Arrowsmith and Susanna James – took up residence with her in Leamington⁴⁶ and by April 1861 Ellen's mother had joined the team, maintaining the strength as Susanna returned to her home in Hampshire⁴⁷. The Arrowsmith family were based in Bolton, some ten miles north-west of Higher Broughton⁴⁸ and Mary herself had just given birth. A daughter, Lina, had been born during a shooting tenancy in Scotland on the glorious twelfth of August and it could be said with confidence that her father never forgot the birth date of at least one of his children⁴⁹. At the beginning of April two houses were in family occupation in Leamington: Ellen's mother Mary Knight and five Arrowsmiths (including brother-in-law Peter) occupied a house in Beauchamp Square⁵⁰, and Ellen and her three children, together with seven servants (butler leading), were resident in Brandon Parade⁵¹. The Renshaw twins were born at the beginning of January 1861 and with four nursing staff supporting Ellen, would soon have been enjoying five star nursery care. The family was affluent. Ellen appears to have spent some six months recuperating in Leamington then in early July a local journal carried a report of her departure to Higher Broughton⁵² and her name was missing thereafter from the published roll of visitors. By June the Arrowsmiths evidently had also left and returned to the north⁵³. Initially Ellen most probably made a home for her young family in the Renshaw

⁴³ ODNB 2011 for William Renshaw; Blackburn Standard 19/9/1860 p.3.

⁴⁴ Edith Ann Renshaw, born 4th quarter 1859, registered in Salford (ACU). James had a daughter named Margaret by his first wife (born 1852) and she seems to have been taken in soon after his death by her aunt Margaret Platt (born Higgins) (censuses for Margaret Renshaw 1861 & 1871 [ACU] etc).

⁴⁵ Leamington Advertiser 4/10/1860 p.4 (Regent Hotel), 14/11/1860 p.6 (21 Beauchamp Square)

⁴⁶ Leamington Advertiser 14/11/1860 p.6, 29/11/1860 p.4 (21 Beauchamp Square [Mrs PR Arrowsmith], Brandon Lodge [Mrs WJ James]), etc

⁴⁷ 1861 censuses for Ellen Renshaw, Mary Arrowsmith/Mary Knight & Susanna James (taken on night of 7 April), ACU. Susanna's home was on the Isle of Wight; she was then a widow with several children – remarried to Charles Cousen on IoW in 1862.

⁴⁸ Peter Arrowsmith was prominent in the Bolton locality as businessman, magistrate and councillor. He was mayor of Bolton for two years (1853 – 55) and at the time carried on the business of cotton-spinning (obituary Manchester Courier 26/8/1890 p.3, also "www.boltonsmayors.org.uk" 2020). See also 1860 Preston electoral roll entry for PRA giving "abode" as The Ferns, Heaton, near Bolton.

⁴⁹ Lina Holt Arrowsmith, born 12/8/1860 in Abernethy & Kincardine, Moray, Sc (ACU). Shooting tenancy: Elgin Courant 12/10/1860 p.5.

⁵⁰ Census 1861 for Peter Rothwell Arrowsmith

⁵¹ Census 1861 for Ellen Renshaw. See also Leamington Advertiser 31/1/1861 p.4 etc.

⁵² Leamington Advertiser 11/7/1861 p.4: Departure "from Brandon Lodge to Park Bank, Higher Broughton, Manchester".

⁵³ Leamington Advertiser 13/6/1861 p.4 – new residents at 21 Beauchamp Square.

heartland near Manchester and the twins would have learned to walk and talk in Lancashire, but then before they reached reading age the family moved to Gloucestershire⁵⁴.

As a widow with three exceptionally clever young sons to educate, Susan Myers made the long move from the Lake District to Cheltenham and delivered her sons into the care of Cheltenham College as day boys⁵⁵. Arthur Myers became a pupil there in 1863 and, as we have seen, in due course moved on to Trinity, Cambridge where he honed the racket skills which were later deployed to effect on the lawns of Wimbledon. Ellen Renshaw was to travel a shorter distance to Cheltenham at a much younger age but perhaps her reasons were similar. From 1851, Cheltenham College had found favour with the Higgins family of Salford and by 1865 four of the children of Ann and James Higgins had boarded there and a fifth was destined to follow in 1869⁵⁶. Ann was the sister of James Renshaw, who himself had been first married to Ann's sister-in-law Elizabeth Higgins, and the Higgins Cheltonians were first cousins of the twins. The families were very close – through blood, location and business⁵⁷ – and although Ann had died in the mid fifties, the links were strong and the Higgins' familiarity with the popular spa town is likely to have been influential with Ellen.

In the autumn of 1864 Cheltenham hotels benefited from the patronage of Renshaws and Arrowsmiths⁵⁸ - perhaps on scouting expeditions - and then in February 1865 Mrs Renshaw arrived at Fern House, Bays Hill, Cheltenham to take up residence⁵⁹. The twins were just four years old and Edith was five. Over time Ellen settled into the ranks of the town's fashionable society and at the end of 1866 she was well enough established to feel a need to publicise her forthcoming Evening Party in The Cheltenham Looker-on's List of On-Coming Engagements (– a facility provided by the journal to enable readers contemplating entertaining their friends to avoid “selecting dates already occupied” and consequent disappointment)⁶⁰. Ellen's party was for 4th January and she followed this in February with an appearance as “Undine” (a water spirit) at the Bachelors' fancy dress ball in the Assembly Rooms – attended by over three hundred guests and according to the Looker-on, “unquestionably the gaiest event of a Cheltenham Winter Season”⁶¹. She was just under thirty years of age and bachelors were of more than passing interest.

Fern House featured as her address for three years and then in March 1868 she moved to Clarence House, The Promenade, close to Bays Hill⁶². The new house, “a detached villa residence desirably situated”, built around 1832, offered generous accommodation and

⁵⁴ In 1861, her father-in-law William Renshaw was living with his wife in Salford (Adelphi Terrace) and brother-in-law Henry Renshaw was living with his family in Broughton (censuses 1861 for WR senior & HCR).

⁵⁵ Susan Myers census 1861 (ACU). CC register 1910 for her sons as day boys: Ernest 1856 - 1861 (p.194), Frederic 1856 – 1859 (p.194), Arthur 1863 – 1869 (p.261).

⁵⁶ CC register 1910 for the Higgins brothers: Frederick 1851 - 1857 (p.137), Charles 1856 - 1860 (p.188), Henry 1859 – 1862 (p.219) Alfred 1860 – 1865 (p.234) Arthur 1869 - 1870 (p.330).

⁵⁷ Frederick Higgins, Old Cheltonian and grandson of William Renshaw like the twins, was appointed co-executor to his grandfather when he died at Salford in 1864 (Probate 1864, ACU). He too lived in the Manchester area (Census 1871, Cheetham) and was much the same age as Ellen (see Manchester Courier 24/3/1893 p.8 – profile as candidate for North Salford). See also George Higgins, uncle to Frederick, who was a Salford cotton spinner (censuses 1871 & 1881) and sent his son Walter to CC (CC register p.431).

⁵⁸ Arrowsmiths – Plough Hotel, November (Looker-on 5/11/1864 p.722); Mrs Renshaw – Queen's Hotel, December (Cheltenham Journal 10/12/1864 p.4). Rev J. Knight – presumed to be Ellen's brother James - stayed at the Plough Hotel in September (Looker-on 3/9/1864 p.578).

⁵⁹ Looker-on 11/2/1865 p.90 & 18/3/1865 p.168 (visit by P.R. Arrowsmith); Cheltenham Chronicle 6/6/1865 p.8 (Ellen departs for London).

⁶⁰ Looker-on 29/12/1866 p.836

⁶¹ Looker-on 23/2/1867 p.121 to 123

⁶² Looker-on 28/3/1868 p.203

presented itself as a residence well suited to the needs of Cheltenham social life⁶³. Previous occupants, the Bogles, had staged a ball there in the 1850's and the Looker-on had pronounced it "one of the most brilliant and hospitable entertainments of the season"⁶⁴; in the early seventies, Ellen added her own Clarence House ball to the journal's list of Fashionable Engagements⁶⁵. The drawing room was thirty-six feet by eighteen (a good size for dancing), the dining room twenty-four feet by seventeen and there were three other reception rooms on the ground floor. A complete suite of Domestic Offices in the basement supplied all the necessary services and the Chamber Floor provided six bedrooms and three dressing rooms⁶⁶. The garden was small and the lawn "ornamental"⁶⁷ but there were gardens enough on the doorstep in Imperial Square and nearby in Montpellier Gardens. This elegant villa was to be the twins' family home until late 1879.

The move to Clarence House came less than a month before the Cheltenham Easter Ball. Ellen attended the dance in Full Dress and so also did a visitor by the name of Edward Spencer Meara⁶⁸, an officer of the Royal Navy with the rank of Commander, a bachelor some eight years her senior⁶⁹. Whether they met for the first time that night, and waltzed into the early hours with eyes only for each other, is unknown, but by the beginning of September they had formed a close attachment and after a painful separation at the behest of the Admiralty they were reunited and married in the spring of 1870⁷⁰.

Edward came from an Irish family with roots in the county of Waterford (where he was born⁷¹) and strong links to Cheltenham. His maiden aunt Charlotte Meara had made her home in the town by 1841⁷² and Edward and his brother George were sent to Cheltenham College in January 1845 when the school was just three and a half years old. Their stay in the school, though, was brief and they left in June the same year⁷³. Charlotte for her part stayed for the rest of her life, living in style at 9 Royal Crescent⁷⁴, and when she died in 1873 *The Cheltenham Chronicle* mourned her passing as "one of our oldest and most respectable inhabitants...who was a warm friend to most of our local institutions"⁷⁵. During her nephew's bachelor days she was a lady in the social swim, well placed to make judicious introductions should his thoughts turn to romance. Edward's naval career began in 1851 and by 1865 he had seen service as an officer on half-a-dozen ships and worked his way up to the rank of Commander⁷⁶. An appointment to the Coast Guard followed and he remained coast-bound until January 1868 when he transferred onto Half Pay awaiting a ship to command. The Easter Ball was in mid April and when he arrived at the Queen's Hotel just beforehand⁷⁷, he had several months of leisure time ahead of him for the courtship of any lady who caught his fancy. He made much of his opportunity but not quite enough.

In August 1868 Edward was appointed to command *HMS Nymphe* and he returned to sea service on 5th September, sailing from Southampton to join his ship in Bombay on the East

⁶³ Chelt Chronicle 30/8/1859 p.4 & Listing Text 2/12/2013 (Grade II)

⁶⁴ Looker-on 19/1/1856 p.60 & 26/1/1856 p.86 ("the Ball at Clarence House").

⁶⁵ Looker-on 4/1/1873 p.10

⁶⁶ Chelt Chronicle 30/8/1859 p.4 – advertisement to let. Looker-on 29/4/1876 p.285 on dressing rooms.

⁶⁷ Looker-on 29/4/1876 p.285

⁶⁸ Looker-on 18/4/1868 p.253

⁶⁹ Service record, National Archives (ADM 196/13/315), July 2020

⁷⁰ Looker-on 14/5/1870 p.315

⁷¹ Census for ESM 1871 (ACU)

⁷² Censuses for Charlotte 1841 to 1871. In 1841 her brother Henry was part of the Cheltenham household.

⁷³ CC Register 1910 p.92

⁷⁴ Served by butler, cook and coachman (census 1861). Probate for Charlotte Meara 19/9/1873 (ACU).

⁷⁵ Chelt Chronicle 19/8/1873 p.5

⁷⁶ Service record, National Archives (ADM 196/13/315), July 2020

⁷⁷ Looker-on 18/4/1868 p.249

Indies station⁷⁸. Ellen was left to wonder when they might meet again and in the event it was to be ill health that brought him home in 1870. Nymphe was a modern wooden-hulled sloop propelled by screw and armed with four heavy guns and a ram bow. Edward took command in the autumn of 1868 and spent the next fourteen months in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf in pursuit of slave traders and pirates⁷⁹. There was no shortage of action and the Naval and Military Gazette of November 1869 reported on Nymphe's "slave cruising" activities since sailing from Bombay in January and nominated her "the most successful ship this season on the East Indian Station, having captured nineteen dhows and liberated 640 slaves"⁸⁰. For Edward there was prize money to be had and his share was distributed shortly before his marriage in 1870 – a wedding present from the Admiralty⁸¹. In November Nymphe formed part of an expedition to displace a pirate regime in Bahrain and it fell to Edward to command several landing parties including a force of "marines and small-arms men" sent ashore to force the surrender of a garrisoned fort⁸². The expedition was successful and Edward was seemingly well placed in his career, but ill health struck and a few months later he was invalided and had to return to England⁸³.

His passage home was slow but he must have made a good recovery over the ensuing months as when he landed in England on 14th April⁸⁴ he hit the ground running in pursuit of his matrimonial affairs. A visit to Cheltenham came first – once more unto the Queen's Hotel in the week ending 23rd April⁸⁵ - and then attendance in London on 28th April to make oath and apply for a marriage licence⁸⁶. As the licence called for fifteen days residence within the parish of St James, Piccadilly ("usual place of abode") this was as close as it could get and perhaps time in territorial waters was accepted. At much the same time Ellen's brother the Reverend James Knight – due to officiate at the wedding - descended on Clarence House in good time to make arrangements for the ceremony⁸⁷. Ellen and her sailor were married at St James's Piccadilly on 12th May, just twenty-eight days after he arrived back in England⁸⁸.

Clarence House became the matrimonial home⁸⁹ and as Edward never went back to sea, he would have been a major presence in the lives of his Renshaw stepchildren from then onwards. He spent three and a half years on Half Pay and then took his leave of the navy in 1873 with the rank of Retired Captain⁹⁰. Family numbers were increased again in the summer of 1871⁹¹ when a daughter Ida was born to the Mearas and the Renshaws were blessed with a second half-sister named Nellie in 1875⁹². With five servants resident on the premises in 1871 before the new arrivals⁹³, sleeping accommodation must have been pushed to its limits but the family stayed put in Clarence House until the time came for them to leave Cheltenham at the

⁷⁸ Naval & Military Gazette 12/9/1868 p.578

⁷⁹ N & M Gazette 7/11/1868 p.706. ESM arrived in Bombay 3 Oct 1868 and was "invalided" in Jan 1870 (N & M Gazette 26/1/1870 p.87)

⁸⁰ N & M Gazette 27/11/1869 p.864

⁸¹ N & M Gazette 12/3/1870 p.242

⁸² N & M Gazette 9/3/1870 p.231& 232

⁸³ N & M Gazette 26/1/1870 p.87

⁸⁴ Service record (ADM 196/13/315)

⁸⁵ Looker-on 23/4/1870 p.266. As if to emphasise his coming, ESM's name appears under both general "Arrivals" and hotel arrivals.

⁸⁶ Licence application 28/4/1870 (ACU)

⁸⁷ Looker-on 30/4/1870 p. 282. Rev JW Knight officiated at Ellen's marriage in 1858.

⁸⁸ Looker-on 14/5/1870 p. 315. Rev CJ Martyn – curate of St Luke's Cheltenham 1865 to 1869 – "assisted" Rev JWK at the ceremony.

⁸⁹ Census for ESM 1871 (ACU) etc.

⁹⁰ N & M Gazette 4/10/1873 p.635

⁹¹ Birth register 3rd qtr 1871 (ACU). Chelt Chronicle 25/7/1871 p.5 gave dob 15 July, at Clarence House.

⁹² Birth register 2nd qtr 1875 (ACU). Chelt Chronicle 8/6/1875 p.5 gave dob 30 May, at Clarence House.

⁹³ Census for ESM 1871 (ACU)

end of 1879, the year that William took his first step towards sporting stardom by winning the town's inaugural open lawn tennis tournament.

Edward was familiar enough with Cheltenham society and would have blended in well, aided by his family's long presence in the town and tales of his recent exploits under the white ensign. He was soon joined to a men's club and Captain Meara was to be found in newspaper coverage of local wedding celebrations and balls great and small⁹⁴. In June 1872 the Cheltenham College old boys' cricket match was played and this was followed by The Annual Cricketers' Dinner at Queen's Hotel. Although Edward was absent from the roll of the College Past team⁹⁵, which lost by an innings, he attended the dinner and when a toast had been made to The Army and Navy, he responded on behalf of the navy. The next toast was to The Present Eleven and a response was elicited from the team captain – a Mr Browne⁹⁶. This was Ireland's future leading tennis player, Ernest Browne, and as by now William Renshaw was a fellow pupil, the school at that moment was masterminding the education of two men who within a decade were to be the leading players of the two leading lawn tennis nations. Browne was then just under seventeen and a precociously good cricketer⁹⁷.

At the end of 1871 William and Ernest Renshaw had been signed up to Cheltenham College⁹⁸ and had bidden farewell to their tutor Mrs Graham, who with Miss Graham received pupils for General Education at their residence in Rotunda Terrace, a short walk from Clarence House⁹⁹. In February 1872 they entered the manly world of Cheltenham College as day boys, partly following in the footsteps of their five Higgins cousins¹⁰⁰. Here they remained until July 1874¹⁰¹. The College may well have introduced them to the game of rackets and they are most likely to have played fives as well as cricket and football but there is no record of their performances at any game and posterity knows only of some feats of athletics on college sports days (in 1874 Ernest won the junior ladies' prize for the winner of the most events)¹⁰². A writer called Douglas Sladen was a fellow pupil for the whole of their time at the school but five years older¹⁰³. He had an ear for names (and was appropriately editor of the first modern *Who's Who* in 1897) and his memoirs give us the only glimpse of William and Ernest at that time. His school house – Gantillon's – was close to the Renshaw family home and the brothers aged around thirteen used to join him and his fellow pupils for four-a-side football in a nearby field. "The Renshaws were very small boys in those days, but so absolutely certain in their catching, and their drop-kicking, that they counted in football games with boys three or four years older."¹⁰⁴ Sladen adds regretfully "As it happened, I never met them again after they left school..." so that is the only reminiscence we have.

Victorian and Edwardian sources are silent on the lives of the brothers between July 1874, when they left Cheltenham College, and August 1878 when they were commissioned as 2nd Lieutenants in the First Royal Lancashire Militia¹⁰⁵. There is no mention of them in reports of the early Cheltenham tennis tournaments from 1875 to 1877 (although they would have

⁹⁴ Looker-on 11/2/1871 p.90 & 14/12/1872 p.795 (Imperial Club)

⁹⁵ Bell's Life in London 13/7/1872 p.4 (BNA)

⁹⁶ Looker-on 29/6/1872 p.407

⁹⁷ CC Register 1910 p.305

⁹⁸ Chelt College Nomination forms 25/11/1871

⁹⁹ Looker-on 31/12/1870 p.836

¹⁰⁰ The sons of Anne Higgins, née Renshaw & sister of the twins' father James.

¹⁰¹ CC register 1910 p.367

¹⁰² Field 16/5/1874 p.487

¹⁰³ CC register 1910 p.338

¹⁰⁴ "Twenty Years of my life", Douglas Sladen, 1915, p.297, and "Then & Now", Tim Pearce, 1991, p.65.

There were 6 boys in Gantillon's House, which was more in the old style of tutor's accommodation than the three modern houses purpose-built in 1866 to accommodate over 50 boys each. Apart from Sladen, there were 3 Lamb brothers and 2 Blaines – a mixed age group ranging from 12 to 18. Two of the Lambs joined the school in September 1873 and this indicates the age of the Renshaws when they played.

been rather young to participate even in 1877) and their names first appear on a published list of competitors in December 1878 (for a mixed Cheltenham LTC event months after the end of the tennis season)¹⁰⁶. A *Pastime* profile of the twins in 1886 names only Cheltenham College for their schooling but refers to them both being keen cricketers “obtaining average bats at school” and describes in some detail Ernest’s athletic performances at the age of seventeen¹⁰⁷. This suggests that they moved on from Cheltenham to another school rather than to private tutors and it is hard to believe that their stepfather – a son of Nelson - would have favoured the soft option. The twins learnt their tennis in Cheltenham¹⁰⁸ and by the end of 1878 William had sufficient standing to be invited onto his club’s six-strong managing committee¹⁰⁹. In 1879 the brothers began to take part in open tennis competitions and that October William made a dramatic entry onto the fledgling circuit by defeating Vere Gould, the Irish Champion, at Cheltenham’s Winter Garden¹¹⁰. The following year William took Dublin by storm, seizing the Irish crown in May¹¹¹, but he stumbled in London when he lost at Prince’s and Wimbledon without reaching even the semi-final stage¹¹². 1881 saw him sweep the board at these three major events and for the next five years he reigned supreme, his style of play becoming the model for the majority of tournament hopefuls. Ernest was drawn along in his wake and for the next seven or so years ranked amongst the kingdom’s top three players. The Renshaws were innovators and they played a key role in the development of the tournament game as well as popularising events all around the country, drawing crowds wherever they played. Their impatience with cautious and attritional play drove the game forward and the changes they made to stroke-play and tactics bore fruit in the all-court game, the marriage of aggressive volleying with attacking ground strokes. Some called William *the father of lawn tennis*¹¹³.

That the Renshaws should leave Cheltenham College at the age of thirteen is a point of curiosity. Contemporary publications offer no information on the subject and draw a veil over their subsequent education. Might there have been some cause for embarrassment? The twins were pupils at a fashionable major public school which was approved by family and friends, conveniently located and endowed with first class sports facilities for boys of a less academic disposition. Headmaster Thomas Jex-Blake had left a few months before their departure to take up post at Rugby School but there was no obvious reason to uproot the brothers¹¹⁴. At this distance in time, and in the absence of easily accessible documented information, we can only speculate but there is perhaps one theory worth mentioning as it involves Ellen’s siblings and seems a better fit than most.

When Ellen’s brother, the Reverend James Knight, conducted her marriage ceremony in May 1870, he was the vicar of Skendleby in Lincolnshire¹¹⁵ and also chaplain to St Paul’s School, Stony Stratford, near Newport Pagnell¹¹⁶. By the end of 1870 he was sub-warden of St

¹⁰⁵ Email 3/9/2013 from the curator of the King’s Own Royal Regiment Museum. After preliminary training, Militia duties comprised principally a month’s training in Lancashire each summer, but officers may have served for more days.

¹⁰⁶ Looker-on 14/12/1878 p.801

¹⁰⁷ Pastime 2 June 1886, p.367

¹⁰⁸ See Obituaries in Field 9/9/1899 p.464 (ER), Looker-on 9/9/1899 p.858 (ER), Field 20/8/1904 p.352 (WR)

¹⁰⁹ Looker-on 28/12/1878 front page. The other two male members of the committee were Dr Abercrombie and Henry Porter.

¹¹⁰ Field 11/10/1879 p.493

¹¹¹ Field 29/5/1880 p.685

¹¹² Field 26/6/1880 p.831 (Prince’s), Field 10/7/1880 p.74 (AELTC).

¹¹³ Morning Post 15/8/1904 p.5, Looker-on 20/8/1904 p.865

¹¹⁴ Rev TW Jex-Blake left the College for Rugby in March 1874. His replacement, Rev H Kynaston, came from Eton and was to remain in place until 1888 (CC register 1910 p.21).

¹¹⁵ Looker-on 14/5/1870 p. 315

¹¹⁶ Northampton Mercury 22/1/1870 p.4

Paul's and actively engaged in providing a "high class education to the Sons of the Clergy and of professional men" at a cost of £60 per annum (full board included)¹¹⁷. After completion of building works in progress at the time, the school was to be capable of accommodating two hundred pupils. Between 1859 and 1867 James had been headmaster of the Grammar School of King Edward VI, Lichfield so that he brought to Stony Stratford considerable expertise and experience¹¹⁸. By April 1871 he had taken an Arrowsmith under his wing as a pupil – Ellen's nephew Percy Robert Arrowsmith¹¹⁹ – and the Knight family were presenting a dual involvement with the school. Founded in 1864, St Paul's was very young and by 1870 it was struggling to make ends meet and undergoing a process of development¹²⁰. It was too small and its facilities too limited for it to measure up against the modern public schools. The managing council, headed by the Bishop of Oxford as president, concluded that investment was needed and launched a share issue late in 1872 with the principal objective of acquiring the freehold of the property and erecting "additional accommodation for 150 new boys"¹²¹. A major increase in pupil numbers was called for.

It is a possibility that the Renshaw twins transferred from Cheltenham College to St Paul's in the autumn of 1874 to support their uncle's school in its hour of need. If so, they could have expected to receive an academic education of good quality and the opportunity to play the major games, as the school encouraged participation in competitive sports (fielding teams for occasional football and cricket matches and staging swimming sports days¹²²). Sadly the school's financial problems proved intractable. After limping on for another eight years, St Paul's closed in 1882 and its proprietary company went into liquidation¹²³. By the time *Pastime* and other journals interested themselves in Renshaw biography, the school – described with faint praise by The Times in 1877 as "raised to a high place in the second rank of public schools"¹²⁴ – had ceased to exist. James Knight had left the school by the end of 1875, following hard on the heels of his warden Walter Hatch¹²⁵, and in May 1876 he returned to Church of England employment as curate of Screveton and Car Colston near Nottingham¹²⁶; he died at Car Colston vicarage in August 1878¹²⁷. In his days as vicar of Skendleby, he had advertised for residential pupils to supplement his income and it is possible that the twins were tutored by him for a time after they left Cheltenham College¹²⁸. If they followed their uncle to St Paul's, they may have followed him when he bailed out and been tutored by him in his own home.

¹¹⁷ John Bull 17/12/1870 p.873

¹¹⁸ Cambridge alumni June 2020, Globe 7/2/1867 p.4 etc. By 1859 Lichfield GS was more than 350 years old; old boys from the eighteenth century included the great Dr Samuel Johnston and the actor David Garrick (school website July 2020).

¹¹⁹ 1871 census for PRA (p5) & JWK (p4)

¹²⁰ Northampton Mercury 1/10/1870 p.7

¹²¹ John Bull 30/11/1872 p.814 & 8/3/1873 p.154 (target sum £30,000)

¹²² Field 19/7/1873 p.64 (cricket), 11/11/1876 p.584 (football), 3/8/1878 p.145 (swimming); the name Renshaw was not to be found in any of the match reports. In February 1876 the school advertised for a professional bowler (Field 19/2/1876 [post 216, p.54])

¹²³ Buck's Herald 19/8/1882 p.5, 30/12/1882 p.4, & 6/1/1883 p.4; Manchester Courier 25/11/1882 p.4. The school was reopened in May 1888 but survived only seven or so years.

¹²⁴ Obituary for Rev WM Hatch, former warden of St Paul's, Times 6/12/1877 p.10 (TDA).

¹²⁵ Daily Post 5/8/1875 p.4, Friend of India 6/11/1875 p.viii (Hatch on council, no mention of sub-warden), Croydon's Wkly Standard 19/8/1882 p.4 (Supplement)

¹²⁶ Lincolnshire Chronicle 19/5/1876 p.6 & Cambridge Alumni June 2020, ACU

¹²⁷ Nottinghamshire Guardian 30/8/1878 p.8 & Probate November 1878, ACU

¹²⁸ Stamford Mercury 17/7/1868 p.1: "REV. J. W. KNIGHT, late Head Master of the Grammar School, Lichfield, and now Vicar of Skendleby, near Spilsby, receives into his house a few Pupils to be prepared for the Public Schools or for Commercial pursuits. Terms, 50 Guineas a year. No Extras.".

Ernest Hamilton Browne (& Ella Ramsay)

During the Renshaw years at Cheltenham College the outstanding school sportsman was one Ernest Browne – or Ernest de Syilly Hamilton Browne to give him his full name. Browne's family were based in Northern Ireland and some years after leaving school he took up lawn tennis and joined Dublin's Fitzwilliam Club. He soon developed into Ireland's leading player in succession to Vere Gould and was a leading player on the British tournament circuit for more than a decade¹²⁹. He maintained close links to Cheltenham throughout his life – underpinned by marriage into a Cheltenham family - and was described by contemporary Harry Scrivener as the "friend and mentor of the Renshaws in their Cheltenham days" ("Memories of Men and Meetings", 1903¹³⁰).

Browne would certainly have been a role model for sportsmen at the time and he was a big fish in a big pond because Cheltenham then was one of the largest public schools in England with around 670 pupils¹³¹. In Rugby School parlance he was Cock of the School: cricket eleven for five years from 1870 to 1874 and captain for three; football twenty for three years from 1871 and captain in his last year; fives champion for three years, rackets champion for his last two years (- he took up the game quite late); and, just to round everything off, senior prefect in 1874¹³². Author Douglas Sladen, a contemporary at Cheltenham¹³³, referred to him as a great friend and labelled Browne "the greatest of all footballers at Cheltenham College in the early seventies". In one of his novels he modelled the hero on his friend but generously endowed him with his own talents as a writer¹³⁴. Cricket was the senior sport in those days, for skill rather than manliness, and perhaps most telling is the accolade bestowed in Baily's Magazine for December 1873. In reviewing the past season, Baily's describes Browne as one of the top three public school batsman in the country and undoubtedly the best all-rounder, "equally successful as a bowler and in the field, as in batting"¹³⁵. *Pastime* for its part in 1886 records the endorsement of the great W.G. Grace who apparently invited Browne to play for Gloucestershire when he was sixteen and in every subsequent year that he remained at the school¹³⁶. Impressionable young boys would have fallen at his feet in worship – some adults too. As a lawn tennis mentor for the Renshaws, though, his role would have been delayed by absence overseas and it is quite likely the twins took up the game before he did.

Browne's parents were based in the north of Ireland and the main family property was the Claudy estate some ten miles south east of Londonderry¹³⁷. After leaving school in 1874 Browne was sent to live in Central America for several years – possibly with a brother in Nicaragua¹³⁸ - and in 1886 *Pastime* could observe that after his return he was an experienced shot at all sorts of game, big and small, "from the forests of Central America to the bogs of

¹²⁹ See JJ Treacy's observation on 1880 in his volume "Fitzwilliam's First Fifty", c.1927, p.12

¹³⁰ "Lawn Tennis At Home & Abroad", Wallis Myers, 1903, p.52. Scrivener was president of the Oxford University lawn tennis club in 1885; he played at Wimbledon for the first time in 1888, the Fitzwilliam in 1890, and was later referee of the Wimbledon championships.

¹³¹ Historian MC Morgan describes the College as the second largest public school in England in 1861 with 600 pupils ("Cheltenham College – The First Hundred Years", Sadler 1968, p.35). Under headmaster Barry the number rose to a peak of 722 in 1868 (p.43) but fell back to 652 by 1878 (Looker-on 29/6/1878 p.417).

¹³² CC register 1910 p.305

¹³³ CC register 1910 p.338 (also 699, 765 etc). Sladen was a member of the football XX in 1874 after Browne left and succeeded him as senior prefect in 1874. See *The Renshaw twins* in this chapter above.

¹³⁴ Letter from Sladen to the editor of the Gloucestershire Echo 27/8/1935 p.4

¹³⁵ Per CC Archives, visited 26/8/2010: the CC Magazine January 1874 p.86

¹³⁶ "Portrait" in *Pastime* magazine 23 June 1886, p.439

¹³⁷ CC register 1910 p.305 etc

¹³⁸ Two of EB's older brothers died in Dirriamba, Nicaragua, Central America – Arthur in October 1881 (Derry Journal 16/11/1881 p.1) and Sidney in December 1889 (Londonderry Sentinel 18/3/1890 p.2).

central Ireland, where he can give a good account of snipe and woodcock". Returned to Ireland, probably in the summer of 1877 to judge by the performance of one E.H. Brown for the North of Ireland Cricket Club¹³⁹, there proved to be insufficient opportunity for him to play first class cricket in his homeland and he took up the new game of lawn tennis¹⁴⁰. As the sixth of seven sons who survived to adulthood, and with his father alive and firmly installed in Claudy's small mansion, there was a living to be earned and he embarked on a career in estate management. Initially he seems to have been based in Northern Ireland, and in 1878/79 there were reports of him playing cricket for northern clubs and teams¹⁴¹, then he gravitated towards Dublin and in February 1880 *The Field* drew attention to the presence of "an old Cheltenham captain" on the field for a football match between Wanderers (Dublin) and United Hospitals. Browne "played excellently as three-quarter back" for Wanderers and "dropped a splendid left foot goal amidst great applause"¹⁴².

In May he made his debut in a major reported tennis tournament - the Irish Championships - and reached the final of the singles All-Comers, eight months after William Renshaw played his first major¹⁴³. Like Herbert Lawford, who also combined a demanding career with success at the top level of lawn tennis, Browne was evidently a man of great energy and it is remarkable that as late as 1991 he could still progress to the semi-final of the national championships in Dublin¹⁴⁴. By 1884 he was practising as a land agent in Dublin¹⁴⁵ and in April 1886 Lady Emily Howard-Bury appointed him land agent and manager of her Charleville estate office in Tullamore, some fifty miles west of Dublin¹⁴⁶. He was to be salaried, with a right to a percentage of rents collected, and the job came with a house, a garden and two fields¹⁴⁷. Lady Emily's letter of engagement stipulated "The Charleville agency to be your principal one, you residing on the spot" and he obeyed orders and moved in with his newly wedded wife. The arrangement worked to the satisfaction of both parties and he was to remain in post, with his main residence in Tullamore, until the 1920's¹⁴⁸. A Justice of the Peace by early 1887¹⁴⁹, he also pursued responsibilities within his professional body and in 1891 was elected a council member of the Irish Land Agents' Association¹⁵⁰. In 1895 this association merged with the powerful Surveyors' Institution of England¹⁵¹ and in the census of 1901 Browne could label himself FSI – a fellow of the institution¹⁵². In time Browne became a landowner in his own right and it was said that in his prime he had seventy estates under his management¹⁵³.

Tournament lawn tennis came early to Ireland. In July 1876 the Irish Champion Athletic Club of Dublin held its first tennis tournament, in parallel with competitions for croquet and archery, and *Freeman's Journal* reported that it was Ireland's first championship: "Lawn tennis

¹³⁹ Northern Whig 27/7/1877 p.8, Belfast Newsletter 23/8/1877 p.3

¹⁴⁰ Pastime 23 June 1886, p.439

¹⁴¹ Londonderry Sentinel 1/8/1878 p.2 ("E. Browne") & 2/10/1879 p.1 ("E. de S. Browne")

¹⁴² Field 7/2/1880 p.156. The match was played at the Lansdowne Road ground.

¹⁴³ Field 29/5/1880 p.684

¹⁴⁴ Field 6/6/1891 p.849

¹⁴⁵ Thom's Dublin street directory 1884 p.1404, & Dublin directory 1884 Nobility etc p.1634

¹⁴⁶ Letter of appointment from Lady E dated 1/4/1886, ref. OCL P43/10 per Offaly Archives, Tullamore, 14/8/2020. See also Midland Counties Advertiser 27/3/1890 p.2 etc.

¹⁴⁷ Appointment letter 1/4/1886

¹⁴⁸ Leinster Reporter 19/8/1922 p.1

¹⁴⁹ Midland Counties Advertiser 3/3/1887 p.4

¹⁵⁰ Irish Times 28/8/1891 p.7. There were 166 members at this time.

¹⁵¹ Irish Times 30/8/1895 p.5

¹⁵² Census for EHB 1901. Also: Thom's directory of "The Surveyors' Institution - Irish Branch" "List of Fellows 1923" p.205 (ACU).

¹⁵³ Obituary Gloucestershire Echo 16/4/1946 p.1. All but one of his older brothers had died by 1901 and it seems likely that the family estate in Claudy came into his ownership (see Belfast Gazette 6/2/1931 p.111).

has only of late become a favourite game in Ireland, and this is the first time a championship contest has been set on foot¹⁵⁴. *The Field* of England endorsed its view, announcing: "For the first time in Ireland has the Amateur Lawn Tennis Championship been played"¹⁵⁵. As there were just six entries for the men's singles, and at most two for the women's¹⁵⁶, the competition was far from intense and none of the future big names were in evidence. The Wimbledon rules were still nearly a year from publication and neither report named the rules used¹⁵⁷. The Champion Club repeated their tennis tournament in July 1877 with the number of entries much the same as the first year¹⁵⁸. However, this time the list of competitors was graced by future Fitzwilliam finalist Charles Barry, and in due course *Freeman's Journal* could pronounce him "champion of Ireland" for the year, a worthy winner¹⁵⁹. In October 1877 a Dublin university tournament was held with an impressive twenty entries for a men's singles event¹⁶⁰ and November saw the founding in the capital of the great Fitzwilliam Club. The building blocks were in place for the development of a tournament to rival Wimbledon, although once attracted across the Irish Sea, English invaders - in the shape of the Renshaws and Lawford - were to prove hard to displace from the champion's podium¹⁶¹. In 1878 Vere Goold - future champion of Ireland and Wimbledon finalist - began to make his presence felt. In September he descended on Limerick to collect the men's singles and doubles titles¹⁶² and then in October he was unbeaten playing for Fitzwilliam LTC in matches against Monkstown¹⁶³ and Dublin University¹⁶⁴ (in partnership with Barry for the doubles).

The Fitzwilliam held its first open Irish Championship tournament at the beginning of June 1879 and in the absence of any of the leading English players, Goold and Barry carved their way through the singles field of fifteen players and Goold prevailed in a well-contested final¹⁶⁵. Ernest Browne was absent from all three main events open to men - singles, men's doubles and mixed doubles. By this time he had almost certainly begun to wield a racket but he may have felt he was too much of a novice to compete. His first event reported in the media was probably a county match between Derry and Donegal, played at Mr Macky's estate of Belmont, Derry in early October 1879. There seem to have been six or seven players in each team - four men and two or three women - and Ernest played with his brother Captain William Browne RN in the men's doubles and a Miss Bright in the mixed. *The Londonderry Sentinel* was present to cover the event and it reported that "A large and fashionable gathering witnessed the sport, and partook of Mr Macky's usual hospitality"¹⁶⁶. The journal was silent on the overall result of the match but Ernest won such of his matches as were reported and "Mr W. Browne RN, for a sailor, showed great promise and agility in the back line".

The likelihood then is that Ernest Browne took up lawn tennis in 1878/79. He must have established a reputation for himself quickly at the Fitzwilliam club as in reporting on the Irish Championships in May 1880, *The Field* described him as one of the two best Fitzwilliam players in the all-comers draw in the absence of their strongest player Charles Barry (Goold

¹⁵⁴ *Freeman's Journal* 24/7/1876 p.6; "...on the Champion ground, Lansdowne-road station."

¹⁵⁵ *Field* 5/8/1876 p.169

¹⁵⁶ The *Freeman's* preview named one entry only - Miss Casey; *Field* reported two - Miss Casey & Miss Vance - but declared the result a "walk-over" for Miss Casey.

¹⁵⁷ AELTC rules published in *Field* 16/6/1877 p.709. In 1875 Cheltenham advertised the use of Germains rules for its tournament rather than Sphairistike (*Looker-on* 29/5/1875 p.1 & *Field* 12/6/1875 p.585).

¹⁵⁸ *Irish Times* 7/7/1877 p.6 & *Freeman's Jnl* 7/7/1877 p.6. Six men played, three women.

¹⁵⁹ *Freeman's Journal* 11/7/1877 p.6

¹⁶⁰ *Freeman's Journal* 4/10/1877 p.6

¹⁶¹ "The Fitzwilliam Story", Ulick O'Connor, 1977, p.85

¹⁶² *Field* 5/10/1878 p.442

¹⁶³ *Freeman's Jnl* 14/10/1878 p.7

¹⁶⁴ *Freeman's Jnl* 1/11/1878 p.7

¹⁶⁵ *Field* 7/6/1879 p.681 & 14/6/1879 p.710

¹⁶⁶ *Londonderry Sentinel* 16/10/1879 p.2

was waiting in the wings for the challenge round)¹⁶⁷. In the mixed doubles Browne was paired with Miss May Langrishe, Irish singles champion of 1879 and one of the Fitzwilliam club's strongest competitors despite her youth¹⁶⁸, but they lost in the second round¹⁶⁹. He progressed to the final of the all-comers' singles and there met fellow Old Cheltonian William Renshaw, with predictable consequences. Commenting favourably on his performance, albeit in defeat, The Field observed that he was "only a recent disciple of the game and has had very few opportunities of practising with even moderately good players", which suggests that he was only recently arrived from the north¹⁷⁰. From that time on during the Renshaw-Lawford decade he was one of the top three Irish players and in 1888 Herbert Lawford stated the view publicly that he was "for years the best player in Ireland"¹⁷¹.

Browne ranked in the world singles top eight for around ten years and at his peak he would have been placed fourth, after the usual suspects of the Renshaws and Lawford (- historian Charles Heathcote labelled him the fourth most successful player for the 1885 season with singles titles at Bath and Cheltenham¹⁷²). His greatest successes in the leading events were in doubles rather than singles and he probably recalled with particular pleasure defeating the Renshaw twins in the challenge round of the men's doubles in Dublin in 1882, and triumphing over William Renshaw & Marian Bradley the same week in the final of the mixed doubles, playing with Miss Perry¹⁷³. By May 1882 he had taken on the role of Honorary Secretary to the Fitzwilliam club and he held the post for a year¹⁷⁴, thereafter serving on the Championship committee for a further four years until he took on business and family commitments in Tullamore¹⁷⁵. *Pastime* considered him to be one of the most influential players of those early days: "Irish lawn-tennis owes much to his example and advice, and several good players, notably Miss Martin, are not slow to attribute their proficiency to his instructions"¹⁷⁶. He played in mixed doubles events throughout his career and by his example encouraged women's participation in the major tournaments, as did the Renshaws. In those early years the Fitzwilliam's colours of chocolate and maize are said to have become known as "brown and gold" in honour of the club's leading lights - Browne and Goad¹⁷⁷.

Browne was a boarder at Cheltenham College for seven and a half years, leaving in July 1874 close to his nineteenth birthday. The experience seems to have endeared Cheltenham to him and he maintained close contact with the school and town for the rest of his life. For some fifty years he played for the Old Cheltonians in the school speech day cricket match and he was appointed to the College Council in 1925 (after he had taken up residence in Cheltenham) serving for twenty-one years¹⁷⁸. The Cheltenham open tennis tournament benefited from his patronage in 1881, its second year (when he lost to Ernest Renshaw in the

¹⁶⁷ Field 29/5/1880 p.684

¹⁶⁸ O'Connor 1977 p.87. ML was born 31/12/1864 (ACU) - see Kilkenny Moderator 10/9/1910 p.4.

¹⁶⁹ Field 29/5/1880 p.684 col'ns 2 & 3: "The defeated pair might have done much better if Mr Browne had left more strokes to his partner, Miss M. Langrishe, who was quite capable of doing a fair share of the work; but perhaps it was partly owing to his having rarely played in partner matches with ladies who were fairly certain with their returns".

¹⁷⁰ Field 29/5/1880 p.684 col'n 3

¹⁷¹ HFL letter in "The Field Lawn Tennis Calendar 1888" covering 1887 (copy per Mark R)

¹⁷² Badminton Library, "Lawn Tennis", p.169: "1885.....After the three leaders Mr E. De S. Browne was certainly the most successful player of the year. He placed to his credit the West of England championship at Bath, and the open singles at Cheltenham....."

¹⁷³ Freeman's Jnl 29/5/1882 p.7 & Field 3/6/1882 p.741

¹⁷⁴ O'Connor 1977 p.77 & Field 27/5/1882 p.711

¹⁷⁵ Field 2/6/1883 p.723 etc

¹⁷⁶ "Portrait" in *Pastime* magazine 23 June 1886, p.439. Louisa Martin began her tournament career in Cheltenham in 1884 and was to be Irish champion nine times between 1889 and 1903 (O'Connor p.87).

¹⁷⁷ O'Connor 1977 p.5

¹⁷⁸ EHB obituaries in Gloucestershire Echo 16/4/1946 p.1 & The Cheltonian 1946 p.78; electoral roll 1923.

final of the April men's singles¹⁷⁹), and he won the Cheltenham men's singles three years running from 1885 to 1887¹⁸⁰. William Renshaw partnered him in the Cheltenham men's doubles of 1885 and 1886 so in those years it was inevitable that the doubles' trophy was lodged in Tullamore alongside the singles¹⁸¹. In *Pastimes'* view Browne's volleying at the net was unsurpassed by William himself (when he was playing with confidence) and they would have been a world-beating combination. The Meara-Renshaw family moved its principal residence from Cheltenham to London at the end of 1879¹⁸² and from this time contact between Browne and the twins outside the principal tournaments would have been reduced, although all three probably continued to patronise some College and social events in Cheltenham¹⁸³. The Ladies' Fancy Dress Ball of January 1885 was one such event, drawing in both Browne and William Renshaw¹⁸⁴.

This dance was a regular feature of the season of balls and came just two days after the New Club's ball. Both dances were held in the Assembly Rooms and as the decorations for the first were maintained for the second, and catering to both was provided by Mr George, with music for both under the baton of Mr Pollock, the main distinguishing feature of the ladies' event was fancy dress – and the need for men to be invited by a woman¹⁸⁵. Miss Ella Ramsay attended both dances and was listed as one of the fifty or so issuers of invitations for the ladies' ball. In the circumstances it would be fair to assume Browne attended at her request, summoned from Dublin to join her in the fun (- his fancy dress was reported as *Windsor Uniform*)¹⁸⁶. They were to marry in December that year and the likelihood is that by January their courtship was well advanced. They would have known of each other from at least 1881 when they both played in both Cheltenham tournaments, Ella on home territory, and both played in the April open mixed doubles¹⁸⁷. Then in 1882 they had faced each other across the net in Dublin in the second round of the Fitzwilliam mixed doubles. Ella played with Ernest Renshaw while Browne was partnered by Miss Perry and Ireland defeated England in straight sets¹⁸⁸. In 1884 a variation in mixed doubles partners suggested a developing relationship. Paired with the best of the Irish ladies from the start of his career, Browne had collected trophies with impressive consistency but in the summer of 1884 the Irish eyes of Langrishes and Perrys stopped smiling as he turned his attention to roses of England. In May Browne played in the Fitzwilliam mixed with May Langrishe and lost in the semi-finals to William Renshaw & Maud Watson¹⁸⁹. In June he collected the mixed title for the Northern tournament in partnership with England's Edith Davies, a doubles partner of Florence Mardall¹⁹⁰, and then in August he teamed up with Ella for the Scarborough tournament and together they won the

¹⁷⁹ Field 23/4/1881 p.562 & 24/9/1881 p.461&2

¹⁸⁰ Field 11/6/1887 p.828 & Looker-on 11/6/1887 p.405. His victims in all three tournaments included James Dwight but neither of the Renshaws played in the singles.

¹⁸¹ Field 13/6/1885 p.791 & 19/6/1886 p.811

¹⁸² Looker-on 18/10/1879, p.666 and see Chapter 9, "1879" penultimate para below.

¹⁸³ In 1879 "Renshaw" won the OC quarter mile flat race at the school sports (Field 19/4/1879 p. 463 & Looker-on 12/4/1879 p.235)

¹⁸⁴ Looker-on 24/1/1885 p.58 & 59

¹⁸⁵ Looker-on 24/1/1885 p.57 to 59

¹⁸⁶ Looker-on 24/1/1885 p.58. The edition of 31/1/1885 (p.75) recorded EHB's arrival at the New Club from Ireland.

¹⁸⁷ Field 23/4/1881 p.562 & 30/4/1881 p.595. EHB played in the mixed with Miss B. Williams of Kilkenny LTC.

¹⁸⁸ Field 27/5/1882 p.711

¹⁸⁹ Freeman's Jnl 22/5/1884 p.7, Field 24/5/1884 p.715

¹⁹⁰ Edith also won the Northern women's singles and doubles (Field 21/6/1884 p.869 & 870 & 28/6/1884 p.908). The Northern was played in Liverpool that year. Edith had Cheltenham links and had formed a successful doubles partnership with Florence Mardall, winning at Bath and Cheltenham earlier in 1884 (Field 7/6/1884 p.790 & 14/6/1884 p.832). Her club was Claydon LTC (near Aylesbury, Bucks).

Yorkshire open county title¹⁹¹. The opposition was unfamiliar – none of the other leading ladies from Cheltenham and Dublin entered - and as Ella played in just the one event, she must have ventured north primarily for the company of her partner. Aged twenty-five and with both her parents dead, she would have enjoyed more freedom of movement than most other young women of those times¹⁹².

After the 1885 season of balls was finished, Ella crossed to Ireland for the Irish championships with the rest of the Cheltenham contingent (the Watson sisters, the Renshaws, Florence Mardall and John Kay) and in late May she teamed up again with Browne in Dublin¹⁹³. A bye and two good wins took them to the final of the mixed but there they ran up against the just-good-friends pairing of William Renshaw & Maud Watson and lost in straight sets¹⁹⁴. Their relationship held firm and in June they tried again in the Cheltenham mixed only to fall at the first fence to Charles Lacy Sweet & Beatrice Langrishe (– a strong pair who progressed through to lose the final against Renshaw & Bracewell)¹⁹⁵. They were married in Kensington in December 1885¹⁹⁶ and Ella once more sailed across the Irish Sea, this time to make her home in Tullamore. Cheltenham's John Kay had rather pioneered tennis unions in 1881 by marrying fellow club member Beatrice Mardall¹⁹⁷ but the Browne/Ramsay marriage must still have ranked amongst the earliest examples of tournament circuit romance. In Cheltenham sport and Society were joined at the hip.

Ella Ramsay made her first appearance in the tennis reports of *The Cheltenham Looker-on* as partner to Gerald Mockler in the Cheltenham mixed doubles handicap of November 1877, when the print was barely dry on the Wimbledon rules and play was in its infancy¹⁹⁸. The weather must have been kind. She was just nineteen at the time and Gerald, also nineteen, was just out of school having left Cheltenham College the previous December after six years as a day boy¹⁹⁹. Subsequently Ella played in all the reported club events for 1878 to 1882, with the exception of the January 1880 mixed tournament, and she formed part of the club's core of pioneer match players whose highest achievers in open singles events in those first few years were Florence Mardall²⁰⁰, Fanny Morris, Marian Bradley and Mary Abercrombie²⁰¹. Her participation in singles events tended to end in the early rounds, if she entered, but she formed a successful doubles partnership with Clara Hill in the years up to her marriage and played with her in the Cheltenham tournaments between 1881 and 1885 and at Bath in 1884. In 1879 she partnered "Miss Renshaw" in Cheltenham LTC's first open tournament and together they won their first round match against a pair from Raglan LTC, before falling in the second round to Mardall & Hill. *The Field* spoke approvingly of Ella's play but felt that Miss Renshaw needed a variation on her lob stroke: "Miss Ramsay played admirably, being at once graceful and active, but her partner ought to have abstained occasionally from spooning the balls up to the roof of the building..."²⁰². It is reasonable to

¹⁹¹ *Yorkshire Gazette* 18/8/1884, p.4

¹⁹² Ella was born on 14/10/1858 (*Chelt Chronicle* 19/10/1858 p.5) Her father died in 1875 and her mother in 1880 (*Chronicle* 29/6/1929 p.8). Her eldest brother Alexander evidently took over the family home in Cheltenham on his mother's death and in the 1881 census Ella is shown as resident there (ACU & see probate for Dame Ellen Ramsay 26/6/1880 [Alex then a Liverpool resident]).

¹⁹³ *Field* 23/5/1885 p.678

¹⁹⁴ *Field* 30/5/1885 p.715 & *Freeman's Jnl* 23/5/1885 p.7

¹⁹⁵ *Looker-on* 6/6/1885 p.362 & *Chronicle* 9/6/1885 p.6

¹⁹⁶ *Looker-on* 5/12/1885 p.778, & see *Pastime* 23/6/1886 p.439

¹⁹⁷ *Gloucester Citizen*, "Marriages", 27/8/1881 p.3. Beatrice was just 19.

¹⁹⁸ *Looker-on* 1/12/1877 p.759 & 760. 12 players competed, 6 couples.

¹⁹⁹ CC register 1910 p.350

²⁰⁰ Florence was elder sister to Beatrice, 1881 bride to John Kay.

²⁰¹ Florence won Cheltenham in 1879; Marian - Cheltenham in 1881; Mary - Fitzwilliam in 1882; Fanny - Bath in 1882; see Appendix to Chapter 9.

²⁰² *Field* 18/10/1879 p.536

assume this Renshaw was the twins' elder sister Edith – regrettably a taste of success in the doubles was insufficient to persuade her to persevere with open competition and thereafter her name was missing from the tournament rolls²⁰³.

There is no record of Ella partnering William Renshaw in an open tournament, but in 1882 - as mentioned - she played with Ernest in the Fitzwilliam mixed and after losing to the Irish pairing of Browne & Perry in the second round, they were called upon to entertain the crowd during a gap in play on the final day with an exhibition match against Vere Gould & Miss Blank of Ireland (a prominent player who was shy of the media and withheld her name). England played Ireland and lost but *Freeman's Journal* judged it a grand match and declared that both ladies played splendidly ("not being a bit spared by the gentlemen, who both gave some terrific overarm serves")²⁰⁴. Another leading male Ella partnered was Otway Woodhouse, who in 1880 performed the feat of defeating the Renshaws one after the other in the singles at Wimbledon before falling to Herbert Lawford in the final of the All-Comers²⁰⁵. She teamed up with him at Cheltenham in April 1881 but ran aground in the second round against William Renshaw & Marian Bradley²⁰⁶. In December she played with him again in a club handicap event at the Winter Garden and their pairing perhaps was a reflection of interest off the court as well as on²⁰⁷. Otway's home club was the West Middlesex but he was a working electrical engineer with family links to Cheltenham, and the event may have been held partly to enable him to demonstrate the effectiveness of his firm's lighting system in a large hall²⁰⁸. Eight pairs competed on the indoor skating rink, with most of Cheltenham's leading ladies in action, and William Renshaw & Marian Bradley took the honours. The lighting system was declared a success: "...Mr Woodhouse had concentrated his six lamps, or carbon points, within an enclosed white shade pendant from the roof, which had the effect of throwing the light over the area below with a brilliancy that well-nigh equalled that of sunshine, greatly to the delight of the Lawn Tennis players present...."²⁰⁹.

Ella (Ellen) Ramsay was born and bred in Cheltenham, the only daughter of Sir Alexander Ramsay, 3rd Baronet of Balmain, Kincardineshire and one of Cheltenham's most prominent citizens – *the* foremost citizen according to one obituarist²¹⁰. An enthusiast for Cheltenham College in its earliest years, he chose it for the education of his second son Hugh in 1848 and then set up home in Cheltenham in 1852²¹¹, reaffirming his faith in the school by enrolling his third and fourth sons as day boys in 1854 and 1862 respectively²¹². Sir Alexander was a man of good connections and broad capabilities - a gentleman yet "a capital man of business" - and the school enlisted him into its management team. In 1855 he was appointed to its board of Directors and when the College Council took over from the board in 1862, he

²⁰³ Reports of Arrivals & Departures in the Looker-on mention "Miss Renshaw" in the company of the Mearas with Clarence House as her address – eg. 12/1/1878 p. 26 & 26/7/1879 p.473

²⁰⁴ *Freeman's Jnl* 2/6/1882 p.7

²⁰⁵ *Field* 10/7/1880 p.74 & 17/7/1880 p.114. Otway's home club was West Middlesex LTC.

²⁰⁶ *Field* 30/4/1881 p.595

²⁰⁷ *Looker-on* 17/12/1881 p.812 & 813

²⁰⁸ Earlier in 1881 Woodhouse had entered into partnership with Mr. F. L. Rawson as "engineers and electric light contractors" and at the beginning of December he had supplied the lighting in the Winter Garden for Cheltenham's Fancy Fayre (*Looker-on* 3/12/1881 p.780 & 24/12/1881 p.827, & see also OEW's Institution of Civil Engineers obituary, Vol.91 1/1/1888). OEW also provided the lighting for the Ramsay house for a large private tea party (*Looker-on* 10/12/1881 p796).

²⁰⁹ *Looker-on* 17/12/1881 p.813

²¹⁰ *Chelt Chronicle* reports for Ellen Hamilton-Browne 29/6/1929 p.8 (funeral) & Sir Alexander 9/3/1875 p.5 (obituary - "foremost citizen" column 3).

²¹¹ *Chronicle* 9/3/1875 p.5 col'n 3

²¹² CC register 1910 entries: Hugh Francis Ramsay: 1848 to 1851 (p.115); John: day boy 1854 to 1860 (p.166); Bertin: day boy 1862 to 1868 (p.247).

became a triennial member, appointed life member ten years later²¹³. For twenty years he devoted a large portion of his time to the direction and management of the school's affairs²¹⁴. Committed to social and charitable work in the wider community, he was a local Justice of the Peace and served as a member or president of a variety of management committees. His commercial activities included the chairmanship of the Montpellier Gardens Company, which in 1861 acquired the extensive gardens close to the centre of the town with a view to laying them out and maintaining them "as a place for Public Amusement, Recreation, and Resort"²¹⁵. On his watch, the gardens were established as the home of Cheltenham Croquet Club and later they were to welcome Cheltenham's first lawn tennis club (- Lady Ramsay was one of the four patronesses of the first croquet tournament in 1869²¹⁶). Through life he was a "warm and consistent conservative" and he served for two years as Conservative MP for Rochdale. Active in the local borough election campaigns, he was appointed the first President of the Cheltenham Conservative Association²¹⁷ and would have been well known to James Tynte Agg-Gardner, Conservative MP, sports enthusiast and future president of Cheltenham Lawn Tennis Club. Hunting was his principal sporting activity and he took an active part in establishing the Cotswold Foxhound hunting pack, sharing the role of Master for a few seasons when the need arose. He had a finger in an extraordinary number of local pies and if he had lived beyond 1875, he would undoubtedly have lent his support to the development of his daughter's chosen sport.

Ella grew up in a family at the heart of the Cheltenham establishment and in an enviable social position. She was a fine match with Ernest Browne, who would have been well known to her parents through their association with Cheltenham College, though too young to have been a friend of her brothers, the youngest of whom left the school in 1868²¹⁸. Like the Browne family, the Ramsays owned an estate in a distant part of the kingdom, but unlike the Brownes they had lost the family mansion to debt many years before and Ella never tasted life as a daughter of the manor²¹⁹. A large part of the Balmain estate had been sold off yet part retained and Ella would still have grown up in a family dealing with tenant farmers and the management of an estate. (When her brother Alexander visited as laird after her father's death he used to put up at the Ramsay Arms Hotel in Fettercairn²²⁰ – not quite the same as being piped up the long drive to a grand family castle but he would have been looked after right royally²²¹.) She would have been well prepared for her many years in Tullamore society.

C.F. Parr, Porters, Mardall, Matlbys and Manning (and Mardall & Maltby sisters)

One final Cheltonian to make his mark in a major tournament in those pioneer days was Cecil Francis Parr who boarded at the College for four terms from April 1864 and left at the age of seventeen²²². Parr won sporting laurels at Cheltenham for coxing the rowing eight in 1865 and he shone briefly and brightly at Wimbledon in 1879 by beating Irishman Charles

²¹³ CC register 1910 p.14 & 17

²¹⁴ Obituary in Looker-on 6/3/1875 p.152

²¹⁵ Chronicle 17/9/1861 p.4 - advertisement

²¹⁶ Looker-on 22/5/1869 p.1 - advertisement

²¹⁷ Obituary in Looker-on 6/3/1875 p.152

²¹⁸ Bertin, CC register 1910 p.247.

²¹⁹ "The History of Fettercairn...", AC Cameron, Parlane 1899 p.111 & 112

²²⁰ This hostelry was made famous by Queen Victoria, who stayed there for a night incognito with Albert in September 1861 on a two-night excursion out of Balmoral (Aberdeen Press & Jnl 30/8/1899 p.2 etc).

²²¹ Obituary in Montrose Standard 3/10/1902 p.8. See also Dundee Advertiser 27/8/1880 p.7.

²²² CC register 1910 p.276 & 761 (rowing). Parr had earlier spent 4 terms at Harrow, leaving at Christmas 1862 – hence Hartley's reference to him as a fellow Harrovian in 1933 (Harrow register 1911 p.345 & Yorkshire Evening Post 16/11/1933 p.8).

Barry on his way to a semi-final with John Hartley²²³. He started well against Hartley, taking the first set comfortably 6-2, but then rain intervened and the game turned round. In Hartley's words (many years later): "Then it started to rain and we had to shelter. I was tired and hungry, and ate a good plain tea. The rain ceased, we got back into the court and I found myself quite another man"²²⁴. Hartley claimed the next three sets as comfortably as Parr had won the first – 6-0, 6-1, 6-1 – and the Cheltonian was left to rue the vagaries of English weather²²⁵. As Vere Goold had a bye to the final round, where he lost to Hartley in straight sets, he then played off against Parr to decide the award of second and third prizes. If Parr had beaten Ireland's number one, he could have dined out for years on the claim that rain denied him the Wimbledon crown, but after leading Goold two sets to one he lost the next two 6-4, 6-4 and had to settle for third place. The Field judged their contest "one of the best matches during the competition, both players showing remarkably good form"²²⁶. Vere Goold was a player to be reckoned with and it says much for Parr that he could hold his own against the Irish champion when he was on song.

However promising his performance, Parr seems to have had no ambitions to join the fledgling tournament circuit and it was to be his only appearance at the Championships. He is reported to have played just one further major singles tournament and that probably was just to support his local community. In 1880 he entered the men's events of the first Northern Lawn Tennis Association tournament. He lost in the semi-final of the singles and had to scratch from the first round of the doubles because of injury to his partner²²⁷. Both he and his older brother Henry, who was a steward of the Northern in 1880 and 1881²²⁸, played in the tournament as members of Liverpool Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club and cricket appears to have been his main sporting interest in summer. Henry was a fellow Old Cheltonian who played in the College cricket eleven in 1863 and 1864 in company with Robert T. Reid²²⁹ and represented Lancashire for several years in the 1870's²³⁰; he was also a keen Rackets player and was still playing doubles matches for Liverpool Racket Club in 1893²³¹. Cecil went from Cheltenham to Exeter College, Oxford, where he played cricket for his college and football for Oxford Association Club²³². He trained as a lawyer in London at the Inner Temple and was called to the bar in 1874. After practising on the Northern Circuit initially²³³, he joined the bank founded by his grandfather in Warrington and was appointed a director of Parr's Banking Company in 1878; he rose to be chairman²³⁴.

Beyond Cheltenham's team of "crack" pioneers – the Marshall cousins, Ernest Browne and the Renshaws – there was a good list of Old Cheltonian day boys who supported Cheltenham's tennis club and participated in its early tournaments, a few even competing at Wimbledon. The Porter brothers were involved from inception in 1875 and the Maltbys from 1876. Of the seven men who competed in the select club singles tournament of April 1879,

²²³ Field 12/7/1879 p.45 & 19/7/1879 p.90

²²⁴ Yorkshire Evening Post 16/11/1933 p.8

²²⁵ Todd 1979 p.221

²²⁶ Field 19/7/1879 p.90

²²⁷ Field 24/7/1880 p.140

²²⁸ Field 25/6/1881 p.876

²²⁹ CC register 1910 p.212 & p.756 for HB Parr. In June 1878 the two Parrs travelled down to Cheltenham with a Liverpool club team to play the College eleven. The whole Liverpool team seems to have stayed at Queen's Hotel - Looker-on 15/6/1878 p.385; and see "cricketarchive.com".

²³⁰ Field 28/6/1873 p.643 & 30/8/1873 p.243 etc; also obituary Liverpool Echo 24/3/1930 p.12. He was president of Liverpool Cricket Club in 1922/23.

²³¹ Field 15/4/1893 p.562 & obituary Liverpool Echo 24/3/1930 p.12.

²³² Field 11/6/1870 p.501 (cricket); 13/2/1869 p.132 & 19/11/1870 p.450 (football – 1870 v. Wanderers).

²³³ Foster's Men-at-the-bar, p.353.

²³⁴ Liverpool Mercury 24/7/1886 p.8, obituary for CFP in Liverpool Echo 14/1/1928 p.11; Thomas Parr details on "www.natwestgroup.com/heritage/people" 7/9/2020.

five were locally-resident old boys – the Renshaws, two Porters, and George Mardall – and one - Dr Corbyn - was the father of a College day boy (Hector²³⁵). In the October open singles events, at least nine of the twenty-two male competitors were old boys, including seven of the eight Cheltenham club entrants, and at least seven of the nine female club entrants were sisters of old boys. Three additional Cheltonians played in the men's doubles, if we include two College masters²³⁶, and altogether there were four Cheltonian pairs representing the club. The College connections went beyond the players as the organiser of the 1879 tournaments was the recently retired school doctor, and the manager of the courts used was the enterprising College cricket coach, soon to retire²³⁷. All that was needed to complete the collegiate picture was the headmaster in place as president of the club, but this honour was reserved for Cheltenham's MP James Tynte Agg-Gardner - linked to the College nevertheless by a place on its managing council²³⁸. The Renshaws were still in their teens but most of the old boys involved were in the age range of twenty-one to thirty-three. Compared to other leading public schools such as Eton and Harrow, Cheltenham had a much higher proportion of day boys – 30% of 652 pupils in 1878 – and this partly explains the school's strong representation²³⁹.

Foremost among the supporting cast of Cheltonians were the Porter brothers Fortescue and Henry – two of the nine sons of Robert Tindal Porter educated at the College. Fortescue, aged thirty-three in 1879 and one of the club's oldest match-players at the time, seems to have played no representative sports for the College in his years there and had joined the Indian Civil Service in 1864 for a career that would last thirty years²⁴⁰. In 1878 and 1879 he was home on long leave²⁴¹ and apparently took the opportunity to compete at Wimbledon in both years, losing to Lestocq R. Erskine on both occasions. Considering that Erskine took second prize in the All Comers at Wimbledon in 1878, this was a respectable outcome²⁴². Fortescue probably ranked second amongst the Cheltenham LTC players in 1879 as in the club singles event that April he defeated Ernest Renshaw and lost only to William in the all-play-all format (William won all his matches); he also defeated Ernest & partner in the mixed tournament of December 1878²⁴³.

Henry Porter was some five years younger than his brother and although he had been rackets champion at Cheltenham in 1870 in succession to Arthur Myers, and competed in the public schools' championship at Prince's²⁴⁴, he seems to have ranked only fifth in the club on the basis of the April 1879 tournament. He moved on to Exeter College, Oxford at the end of

²³⁵ CC register 1910 p.365 – from 1872 to 1881

²³⁶ Charles Tillard (CC register 1910 p.44) and Percy Hattersley Smith (p.39). Atwell Porter was the additional OC.

²³⁷ Dr Abercrombie (retired Nov 1878) & James Lillywhite (retired 1880)

²³⁸ Looker-on 23/4/1881 p.265 & 1/10/1881 p.632 (president) & CC register 1910 p.18. Agg-Gardner was appointed to the CC council in 1875 and served for 20 years.

²³⁹ Looker-on 29/6/1878 p.417

²⁴⁰ CC register 1910 p.235 & India List 1905 "Record of Services" p.590 (ACU)

²⁴¹ Looker-on of 25/5/1878 (p.338) records his arrival in Cheltenham (see also Homeward Mail 11/6/1878 p.630); Homeward Mail 2/8/1879 p.836 reports his booking to sail from Southampton on 23 October.

²⁴² As a Wimbledon entrant Fortescue is identified only by his initials – he is reported in the media just as "Mr F.W. Porter" and his club is not mentioned (Field 13/7/1878 p.53 etc); by contrast in its report of the Cheltenham open the Gloucester Journal identifies him as "Mr Fortescue Porter CLTC" (11/10/1879 p.8 - & see Looker-on of same date p.649). In these early days, the chances of there being two different FW Porters competing in open tennis tournaments in the south of England at the same time, is remote.

²⁴³ Looker-on 5/4/1879 p.216 & 14/12/1878 p.801

²⁴⁴ Field 23/4/1870 p.356. Playing with G. Strachan, he lost to Eton 4-0 in the first round – the Cheltenham pair "were overmatched throughout".

1870 and kept up his rackets at college level²⁴⁵. After graduating in 1873²⁴⁶, he returned to Cheltenham and entered employment as an assistant master at the Cheltenham Proprietary School, an institution whose declared purpose was to educate the sons of gentlemen between the ages of six and fourteen²⁴⁷. He remained in post for at least six years before switching to private tuition and preparing for holy orders²⁴⁸. Ordained in 1886, he married Beatrice Watson of Cheltenham the same year²⁴⁹ and moved to Bridstow, Herefordshire, for life thereafter as a parish priest²⁵⁰.

Henry re-entered Cheltenham society as lawn tennis was born and he was to be one of a rare breed – a tournament player who travelled the pilgrim’s progress through all the stages of the development of the game. Tennis was introduced to Cheltenham in the winter of 1874/75, less than a year after Clopton-Wingfield sent his first tennis sets to market, and Henry became a lynchpin of Cheltenham Lawn Tennis Club²⁵¹. He won the first Cheltenham tournament in June 1875 and competed in all the reported club events from 1875 to the end of 1879²⁵². In December 1878 he was named as one of the new club management committee of six²⁵³ and he served on the tournament committee that launched and ran Cheltenham’s first open event in October 1879²⁵⁴. He continued to be actively involved on the tournament committee in the eighties and when the need for a stopgap arose in 1884 he shouldered the duties of tournament secretary, a loyal servant of the club²⁵⁵. From 1881 until 1886 and his ordination, he played the club open and several outside tournaments mainly in south west England (such as Bath, Exmouth and Teignmouth). Wimbledon was favoured with his presence just in 1881 when he lost an even match in the first round against a more experienced competitor (who was trounced by Ernest Renshaw in the second round)²⁵⁶. His singles tournament record was indifferent - he lost mainly in the early rounds - but he achieved some success in mixed doubles when partnered by Florence Mardall, winning at Bath in 1881 and coming second to the Watson pairing of Maud and Erskine at Leamington in 1882²⁵⁷. Returning to his student roots in 1881 he competed in the All England Oxford Doubles in partnership with John Kay but the Cheltenham pair lost in the first round to C.J. Cole and

²⁴⁵ Field 12/6/1875 p.585 refers to HBP generously as “a brilliant racquet player” and mentions that he had been rackets champion of his Oxford college.

²⁴⁶ CC register 1910 p.286

²⁴⁷ Looker-on 19/9/1874, p.1, advertisement. See also Looker-on 3/1/1880, p.2. The school had around 120 pupils and a staff of 8 masters (Looker-on 21/12/1878 p.819).

²⁴⁸ In the census of 1881 he described himself as “Tutor”. See also his advertisement for Tuition in the Looker-on of 21/3/1885 p.178.

²⁴⁹ Looker-on 11/9/1886 p.590

²⁵⁰ CC register 1910 p.286 & List of the Clergy 1897 p.723 (ACU). Also obituary Ross Gazette 26/5/1898 p.4.

²⁵¹ Field 12/6/1875 p.585. First BNA newspaper advertisement by French & Co: Sporting Gazette 14/3/1874 p.239. Wingfield’s patent application made 23/2/1874 (Wingfield biog, GE Alexander p.199).

²⁵² Both Henry and his younger brother Tindal competed in the croquet tournament of June 1875 (Looker-on 5/6/1875 p.361) but the journal refers only to “Mr Porter” in its report of the tennis tournament. The Field 12/6/1875 p.585 mentions that Mr Porter had been rackets champion of his Oxford college “a year or two ago” and so identifies the tennis victor as Henry.

²⁵³ Looker-on 28/12/1878 p.1

²⁵⁴ Looker-on 20/9/1879 p.1

²⁵⁵ Chronicle 10/6/1884 p.3

²⁵⁶ Hon JC Maxwell-Scott, who first played at Wimbledon in 1880 and in 1881 warmed up at the Prince’s open before the Championships (Field 11/6/1881 p.810 & 9/7/1881 p.68, Todd 1879 p.223). JCM-S played in the Championships 4 times and won one match – against Henry; he played in Prince’s 3 times (1881 to 1883) & similarly won just one match.

²⁵⁷ See Appendix to Chapter 9 below

Donald Stewart after a close contest²⁵⁸. Playing with Erskine Watson he reached the final of the men's doubles at Teignmouth in 1884 but the field was relatively weak²⁵⁹.

The Porters' father, Robert, was a career employee of the East India Company who retired to Cheltenham in 1855 to preside over the upbringing of an enormous family. With seven sons to educate by 1857, and two more born in the sixties, he took the precaution of becoming a founding committee member of the Cheltenham Proprietary School for boys. He was actively involved as honorary secretary by 1861 and at the annual prize meeting that year he could look on with satisfaction as two small Porters stepped forward to collect "Scott's Poems" and "Lays of Ancient Rome" for their diligence at German and Arithmetic respectively²⁶⁰. The school was seen as preparatory to Cheltenham College and Robert was still school secretary when Henry joined the staff in 1873/74.

In early tennis history the name of Mardall is best known for the exploits of Florence, who began playing in Cheltenham LTC closed events in 1878, won the first Cheltenham open singles in 1879 and went on to collect a range of open doubles titles from 1881 onwards (such as Bath ladies doubles & Edgbaston mixed doubles in 1884)²⁶¹. Her younger sister Beatrice was also a keen member of Cheltenham LTC and younger brother George was apparently a leading local player during a short interlude between leaving Cheltenham College at the end of 1877 and embarking on a career overseas shortly before the club tournament of October 1879²⁶². In his own modest words, quoted by a descendant in a tennis chat on the internet: "When I left school (Cheltenham College) I took up Lawn Tennis and became one of the best players in Cheltenham, the birthplace of first class tennis. My contemporaries were the Renshaw brothers, afterwards champions of England for several years"²⁶³. Mr Mardall partnered Mrs Corbyn in the 1878 mixed tournament (and collected two impressive scalps²⁶⁴) and gave substance to his claim to a place high in the male pecking order by coming fourth in the April 1879 singles tournament, below the Renshaw twins and Fortescue Porter but above Henry Porter²⁶⁵. However, a promising association with the Renshaws and the tournament game was nipped in the bud when at the close of the Zulu War in 1879 he sailed away to South Africa to join the Natal Mounted Police for a long career in colonial service²⁶⁶. His father before him had served overseas, retiring from the Indian Army as a captain in 1853 then marrying in 1858 and taking up residence in the south of England²⁶⁷.

Like the Porter brothers and Mardall siblings, the Maltby tennis players were the children of a returned colonial. Edward Maltby joined the Indian Civil Service from school and during a lifetime's employment rose to senior rank in Madras with a position as Member of Council, occupying the role of Acting Governor of Madras for a short period just before retiring in 1864²⁶⁸. Coming home, he took up residence in Cheltenham with his large family and by 1871 was a firm part of the establishment – magistrate, church warden and council member of Cheltenham College (a man described in his obituary as "a stately gentleman of the old

²⁵⁸ Field 14/5/1881 p.668 & Jackson's Oxford Journal 14/5/1881 p.5

²⁵⁹ Field 23/8/1884 p.271

²⁶⁰ Looker-on 22/6/1861 p.414 & 415 (ARP for German, HP for Arithmetic)

²⁶¹ Field 11/10/1879 p.493 & see Appendix to Chapter 9 below

²⁶² CC register 1910 p.400. See also census for family 1871 etc.

²⁶³ Rootschat with MR, 19/6/2012

²⁶⁴ Mary Abercrombie & Mr Wilkins, and Clara Hill & Edgar Manning (Looker-on 14/12/1878 p.801)

²⁶⁵ Looker-on 5/4/1879 p.216. GSM was the oldest son of 3; he had two younger brothers at the College – in April 1879 Walter was just 16 and Arthur 14 (CC register 1910 p.420 & 421).

²⁶⁶ CC register 1910 p.400. The Zulu war ended in August 1879 (www.nam.ac.uk, 29/10/2020).

²⁶⁷ Marriage register 27/11/1858 (ACU). Retirement per Home News for India 24/8/1853 p.544.

²⁶⁸ HEIC records – "Lists of Governors of Madras" p.137 & "Annuitants of the Government Fund", Madras p.122 (ACU). Also: Homeward Mail 23/12/1889 p.1602 & "Maltby Family History", Mrs DL Verrill 1916, p.160/1.

school, the soul of honour"²⁶⁹). The town may have appealed to him partly for its educational facilities as he still had six children of school age and in 1867 he enrolled two sons as day boys at the College and a daughter at Cheltenham Ladies College²⁷⁰, with two more sons and another daughter to follow in their footsteps in the seventies²⁷¹. In their time all his sons made their careers in the colonies - three in India, two in Australia and one in Canada – and were lost to Cheltenham apart from a few long leaves from India. Three sons lent their support to Cheltenham LTC during its earliest years and all three of Edward's daughters. Between 1876 and 1879 Francis, William and Ernest together with Jane, Ellen and Mary²⁷² all participated in a variety of the club's tournaments and both William and Jane involved themselves in the club's administration. William assisted with the September 1877 tournament (aged eighteen)²⁷³ and Jane was nominated as one of the club's Managing Committee of six in December 1878²⁷⁴.

It is a possibility that William was the "Mr Maltby" who competed in the club handicap of June 1876 (a year and a half after leaving the College) but as his older brother Francis was home on long leave from India at the time, and would have been the Mr F. Maltby who competed in the Conservative fete tournament of July 1876, he is perhaps the more likely candidate²⁷⁵. Francis was actually the only brother not to be educated at Cheltenham College – instead studying at Wimbledon School while his family was based in Madras - but as his father had been on the College council for five years by 1876, and five brothers had by then been force fed the classics in the school's draughty classrooms, he can be treated as an honorary Cheltonian. He was a soldier of the Indian Army, lieutenant in 1876 and promoted captain in late 1878²⁷⁶. The oldest brother, Edward, was also on leave from India in July and three brothers – Edward, Francis and William – all represented the New Club in a cricket match played against Cheltenham Town late in the month; Edward also played for College Past in the old boys match just afterwards²⁷⁷. William competed in club tournaments in 1877, in June playing off the same handicap as Henry Porter²⁷⁸, but by the end of the year the colonies were calling, and after playing in the mixed event of November²⁷⁹, he sailed for Australia at the beginning of the new year taking his practical knowledge of the Wimbledon rules with him, perhaps to be an apostle of the game for Gayndah, his future home town and "citrus capital" of Queensland (many oranges, few people)²⁸⁰.

Ernest was the youngest of the six brothers and he played in the November 1877 event while still a day boy at the College aged sixteen. The November tournament was for twelve of the club's better players and a third of these were Maltbys – two of each sex being Jane &

²⁶⁹ Homeward Mail 23/12/1889 p.1602

²⁷⁰ Alexander & Arthur (CC register 1910 p.317 & 314), Ellen (email from Ladies C archivist 9/12/2013)

²⁷¹ William & Ernest (CC register 1910 p.386 & 397). Mary probably went to Ladies C as well as Ellen - a Maltby is recorded as leaving in 1872 and by then Ellen would have been 22, Mary 15 (archivist's email 9/12/2013).

²⁷² Francis 1876 & 1879, William 1877, Ernest 1877, Jane 1877 & 1878, Ellen 1877 & 1879, Mary 1879 (Looker-on 8/7/1876 p.441; 11/10/1879 p.649; 1/12/1877 p.759; 14/12/1878 p.801)

²⁷³ Looker-on 15/9/1877 p.1

²⁷⁴ Looker-on 28/12/1878 p.1

²⁷⁵ Looker-on 8/7/1876 p.441. Service record at British Library India Office Records 11/90/f.14. Francis was 28 at the time.

²⁷⁶ Homeward Mail 11/1/179 p.47

²⁷⁷ Chelt Examiner 26/7/1876 p.8

²⁷⁸ Chelt Chronicle 12/6/1877 p.4

²⁷⁹ Looker-on 1/12/1877 p.759

²⁸⁰ Looker-on 5/1/1878 p.10. By 1892 WDM was town clerk of Gayndah, Queensland and he seems to have lived in the locality for the rest of his life (Queensland PO directory 1892 et seq, electoral rolls, death register [ACU]). He died in 1926 and a brief obituary in The Queenslander described him as a "Gayndah pioneer" (12/6/1926 p.20).

Ellen and William & Ernest²⁸¹. Perhaps surprisingly none of the Maltby males entered the large mixed doubles tournament of December 1878 (twenty-two pairs)²⁸², but then William was long gone to Australia, Francis was based in England for a long medical leave and seems to have been en route to Italy²⁸³, and Ernest may have been less confident of his tennis skills in a larger and older pool of players (- he was to opt out of the 1879 tournaments). Three Maltbys performed in the October 1879 open tournament: Captain Francis was returned to action, still on leave, and Ellen and Mary played in the singles and combined for the ladies doubles. Ellen did best - surviving two rounds of the singles and collecting the scalp of Mrs Hill, a losing finalist in the ladies' doubles²⁸⁴. Francis won through the first round of the singles but then came up against Vere Gould and was outclassed. The Field judged his match a stroll for the Irishman: "Capt Maltby struggled hard, but had no chance against Mr St Leger, who won two sets without exerting himself"²⁸⁵.

Cheltenham's first open tournament turned out to be the last hurrah for the Maltbys in Cheltenham as some months afterwards their father resigned from the College Council²⁸⁶ and the family moved from Cheltenham to Hove on the south coast²⁸⁷. In October 1880, soon after they left, Brighton had a taste of Cheltenham's tennis prowess as the Maltby family and the Renshaw twins came down for the first Sussex County Tournament, not quite like the wolf on the fold but in sporting terms there were similarities. Under the banner of their Gloucestershire club, they flexed their racket forearms, deployed the skills honed in Montpellier Gardens, and swept all before them. Ellen and Mary contested the final of the ladies' singles (Ellen prevailed), the twins played out the final of the men's singles (William victor of course), the brothers combined to win the men's doubles, and then William with Miss Davidson claimed the trophy for the mixed²⁸⁸. Ernest Maltby entered only the singles handicap and the mixed (playing with Ellen) but without notable success²⁸⁹; he left England soon after heading for India and the Civil Service, later to switch employment and settle in Canada²⁹⁰. The Field's comment on the ladies singles final was that the sisters were very evenly matched, and some good play was the result, however "neither of the ladies....showed much aptitude at placing the ball – a fact to which possibly some of the long rallies may in a measure be attributed"; unsurprisingly the match between the Renshaw twins was the main attraction.²⁹¹

There is one more Old Cheltonian worthy of mention for his contribution to the club in those early years and he is included as much for his novelty value as his tournament successes or impact on the club's development. Edgar Manning played in Cheltenham probably for no more than two years, participating just in the December mixed tournament of 1878 and then the open of October 1879, but bearing in mind that he defeated Ernest Renshaw in the October singles event, he would probably have ranked in the club's top three players²⁹². He was a thespian, a man who chose to make a living in the theatre through acting

²⁸¹ Looker-on 1/12/1877 p.759

²⁸² Looker-on 14/12/1878 p.801

²⁸³ Looker-on 14/12/1878 p.803 – travelling to Mentone. Record of Service Capt F.C. Maltby (British Library IOR ref. 11/90/f.14): "granted furlough to Europe M.C. for 182 days" from June 1878 after 44 day MC in India; promoted Captain in October 1878 & returned to post in India in February 1880.

²⁸⁴ Field 11/10/1879 p.493 & 18/10/1879 p.536. Ellen nearly took a set off Florence Mardall in 3rd round.

²⁸⁵ Field 11/10/1879 p.493

²⁸⁶ CC register 1910 p.18 (member of council 1871 – 79) & Looker-on 19/6/1880 p.397

²⁸⁷ Edward Maltby census 1881 (ACU) & see Visitors Directory, Brighton Gazette 9/10/1880 p.6 etc.

²⁸⁸ Field 9/10/1880 p.537 & 16/10/1880 p. 573, Daily News 12/10/1880 p.6

²⁸⁹ Sporting Gazette 9/10/1880 p.1036 & 16/10/1880 p.1064

²⁹⁰ Bangalor Spectator 30/7/1881 p.2, Homeward Mail 19/4/1882 p.373, Canada census 1901 (date of immigration 1887) etc.

²⁹¹ Field 16/10/1880 p.573

²⁹² Field 11/10/1879 p.493 & Cheltenham Chronicle 14/10/1879, p.2

& singing and stage management²⁹³. Within the ranks of the old boys - amongst the battalions of soldiers, civil servants and lawyers - he was an oddity and he would have brought variety and laughter to Montpellier Gardens.

Leaving the College in 1872 at the age of seventeen²⁹⁴, Edgar set himself on course for a theatrical career by joining the Cheltenham amateur theatrical group *The Comedy Club*, whose repertoire was primarily comedy and farce as the name suggests²⁹⁵. The group performed before paying audiences on behalf of local charities and was supplemented by professionals for female roles as necessary. Edgar seems to have written as well as performed and he achieved some local fame. In 1878 an amateur theatrical show was staged during the first Cheltenham Cricket Week and on the evening of the first day of play between Gloucestershire and Sussex, the cricketers and their friends attended. The actors were a touring group called The Philo-Thespians and during the interval between two playlets, Edgar appeared on stage to entertain the audience. Dressed in cricketing costume in imitation of W.G. Grace, he sang a comic song which “threw the house into outbursts of laughter” and was pronounced “quite a feature of the evening” by the Looker-on²⁹⁶. History is silent on the reaction of the subject of his parody, but as England’s finest batsman had been dismissed for just two runs that afternoon, his mood is unlikely to have been improved by Edgar’s antics. In fact Edgar was a keen cricketer and after Sussex had batted embarrassingly badly and lost to Gloucestershire by an innings within two days, he was recruited with others to help plug a day’s gap in the programme. A Cheltenham eighteen was cobbled together to play an eleven from the Gloucester and Sussex teams and on the third day he took the field against county cricketers. He opened the bowling and acquitted himself well, taking a wicket and two catches²⁹⁷.

In the October tournament, Edgar encountered opponents of good quality in the main and he won some and lost some. In the men’s doubles he teamed up with Francis Maltby and they collected just three games in losing to brothers Fortescue and Atwell Porter²⁹⁸ (- the latter a lieutenant in the Indian Army home on leave, gymnasium champion of the College in 1866²⁹⁹). In the singles, he had a comfortable win against Hubert Medlycott in the first round, dropping just three games, and then came two close encounters³⁰⁰. He edged past Ernest Renshaw in the second round, “just winning the third set”, and then went down to Herbert Gardner 6-3, 4-6, 2-6 in a match deemed exciting by *The Field*³⁰¹. Gardner won the men’s doubles event, playing with Ernest Burnett, and their victims included the Renshaw twins in the second round³⁰². *The Field* ranked him as third in line amongst the competitors, after William Renshaw and Vere Goold (- “Next to these two Mr Gardner showed the best form, his style being most taking and his service very difficult”³⁰³).

²⁹³ EBM profile in “gsarchive.net/whowaswho” 12/11/2020, “The D’Oyly Carte Opera Company”

²⁹⁴ CC register 1910, p.307. He boarded at Leconfield for 5 years but by 1871 his parents had a house in Cheltenham & they were still in possession in 1880 (Census 1871 for EBM; Kelly’s Directory 1879, p.594 Post Office for father WWM [ACU]; Looker-on 3/4/1880 p.220 & 211 etc).

²⁹⁵ Looker-on 6/12/1873 p.1, 28/11/1874 p.1, 8/12/1877 p.775 etc

²⁹⁶ Looker-on 24/8/1878 p.542

²⁹⁷ Chelt Examiner 28/8/1878 p.2. & Chelt Mercury 24/8/1878 p.3

²⁹⁸ Field 18/10/1879 p.536

²⁹⁹ CC register 1910 p.261. Atwell arrived in Cheltenham from India in Sept. (Looker-on 27/9/1879 p.617).

³⁰⁰ Medlycott was a Harrovian and a Cambridge graduate – Harrow register 1911, p.268.

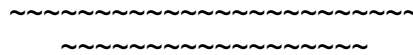
³⁰¹ Field 11/10/1879 p.493

³⁰² Field 18/10/1879 p.536. Ernest Wildman Burnett played cricket in the Harrow first XI from 1861 to 1863 (Harrow register 1911 p.321)

³⁰³ Field 11/10/1879 p.493. At Rugby school Gardner had been captain of cricket in 1870 and an able rackets player, winning the public schools rackets competition of 1870 in partnership with TS Pearson (Rugby register 1842 – 1874, 1902, p.268, Times obituary 9/12/1924 p.8, Field 23/4/1870 p.356 etc).

By the end of the decade, Edgar was performing in amateur light opera productions³⁰⁴ and then he turned professional. He joined the D'Oyly Carte Company and by April 1881 was touring with their Company B for *HMS Pinafore* and *Sorcerer*³⁰⁵. Roles followed as Dick Deadeye in *Pinafore* and Samuel in *The Pirates of Penzance* and in 1882 he took on stage management duties for the company as well³⁰⁶. He worked with D'Oyly Carte on and off until the end of 1884, marrying fellow performer Florence Harcourt in July of that year³⁰⁷. Then he was recruited by an Australian musical comedy company and in 1886 he sailed off to Melbourne with Florence to pursue their theatrical careers down under until retirement in the twentieth century³⁰⁸. He was lost to the tennis circuit after 1879 but he continued his sporting activities for several years as a member of D'Oyly Carte cricket teams, playing around the kingdom while touring. There were some four D'Oyly Carte touring companies and as early as May 1881 he played for *Pinafore* against *The Pirates* at the Lansdown Cricket ground in Bath³⁰⁹. In October 1884 he wrote to *The Era* to respond to a letter suggesting that some theatrical elevens were including outsiders to enhance their performance, against the spirit of fair play as "a theatrical cricket match should be played by theatrical elevens". The concerned correspondent was a Mr Beecher, who described himself as "Captain, *In The Ranks* CC, Grand Theatre, Glasgow"³¹⁰. Reading between the lines that Mr Beecher had been taken aback by the recent high scoring of D'Oyly Carte's *Princess Ida* team in Glasgow, Edgar politely batted away the suggestion and after observing that he had played regularly for D'Oyly Carte for the last five years, signed off "Captain, D'Oyly Carte's Répertoire Company, Gaiety Theatre, Dublin"³¹¹. The "Captain, *Princess Ida* C.C. Hull" added his own response and emphasised that during the season his company had without exception fielded a team made up entirely of company members. There ended *The Era's* exchange of views between thespian cricket captains in Glasgow, Dublin and Hull, and hopefully Scottish suspicions of English sharp practice were allayed.

These then were the principal Cheltenham College old boys who played tournament tennis during the early years and made their different contributions to the development of the game. Some were young men just out of school, some professionals in training and on the bottom rungs of their career ladders, some servants of the empire home on leave, and a few were gentlemen of independent means. The range of ability was considerable but in those pioneering days, when entry lists were often very small, the supporting cast were particularly important to a successful production. Henry Blane Porter wielded his racket with enthusiasm in tournaments all the way through from 1875 to 1885 and deserves to be remembered as one of the great originals, even if his only singles title came amongst eight novices the year after lawn tennis was born³¹².



³⁰⁴ Looker-on 8/11/1879 p.1, *The Era* 5/12/1880 p.9 etc.

³⁰⁵ *The Era* 23/4/1881 p.17 – "April 25th – Sheffield Six Nights"

³⁰⁶ EBM profile in "gsarchive.net" 12/11/2020

³⁰⁷ Marriage register 26/7/1884 (ACU) – profession "Operatic Artist"; also "gsarchive.net" (Harcourt for Jones)

³⁰⁸ *The Era* 14/8/1886 p.7 and profile in "gsarchive.net" 12/11/2020

³⁰⁹ *Era* 28/5/1881 p.15 & 22/8/1880 p.13

³¹⁰ *The Era* 27/9/1884 p.8

³¹¹ *The Era* 4/10/1884 p.9

³¹² *Field* 12/6/1875 p.585

Chapter 7: Cheltenham 1869 to 1875 - from Croquet to Rinking and Lawn Tennis

Introduction and the rise of James Lillywhite

Cheltenham in the eighteen-seventies was variously described by its local newspapers as the Younger Sister of Bath, the Queen of Watering Places and the Garden Town of England³¹³. Like Bath, it had evolved into a thriving spa resort, popular with fashionable society, but it was a child of the nineteenth rather than eighteenth century and its clientele probably featured fewer of the nobility and rather more in the way of retired colonials and servicemen. George III placed it indelibly on the map in 1788 when he spent a six week summer visit there – “an invalid sojourn” to benefit from its medicinal springs³¹⁴ - but by 1801 its population was still only about 3,000³¹⁵. With the support of the medical profession the town began to grow and celebrity endorsement was provided in 1816 when the Duke of Wellington arrived to drink the waters on doctor’s orders just over a year after his great victory at Waterloo. *The Cheltenham Chronicle* swooned:

“Since the ball at Cheltenham a few years since, which the Prince of Wales honoured with his presence, never was seen such a constellation of beauty, rank and fashion as at the Assembly [*Rooms*] on Wednesday evening last, which the Duke and Duchess of Wellington had graciously promised to attend. The company amounted to 600.....Soon after ten o’clock the Duke arrived, amidst the enthusiastic acclamations of hundreds of persons assembled in the street, and a full band immediately struck up “*See the Conquering Hero Comes!*” The passages and staircase of the rooms were brilliantly illuminated, and a beautiful transparency of Britannia held a medallion, with a striking likeness of the illustrious hero....Cheltenham is likely to be honoured this season beyond any other watering-place. In addition to our present noble visitors, intimation has been given from the highest authority, that not only the Regent intends spending some time with us, but that the Princess Charlotte and the Prince of Cobourg propose honouring the Duke of Wellington with a visit during his residence here. The arrival of Nobility during the last week exceeds anything ever before known at a similar period: every house of any consequence we may therefore expect will be shortly occupied”³¹⁶.

Extensive development took place in the first half of the century – the creation of well-appointed spas, elegant villas, lodging houses of quality, handsome shops – and with this improvement of facilities came prosperity and a dramatic growth in the population which rose to over 50,000 by 1871³¹⁷. Slater’s Commercial Directory of 1858/59 attributed the town’s success to its ability to accommodate “the numerous fashionable families who make this place their permanent or temporary residence” and offered the view that while “the malting business” was of some importance, Cheltenham’s prosperity was based wholly on “its numerous and respectable class of visitors.....its neighbouring gentry and other wealthy residents”. The residents were well-to-do and sociable, leisure activities were in good supply, and quite simply it was an attractive and congenial place to live. Heavy industry and manufacturing were well

³¹³ Looker-on 9/11/1878 p.717, Chelt Chronicle 19/4/1870 p.5

³¹⁴ Bury Post 9/7/1788 p.1, Oxford Journal 23/8/1788 p.3, Chronicle 2/10/1877 p.3, Slater’s Commercial Directory 1858 – 1859 (www.genuki.org.uk)

³¹⁵ “Cheltenham College – The First Hundred Years”, MC Morgan, Sadler 1968, p.7

³¹⁶ Chelt Chronicle 18/7/1816 p.3

³¹⁷ Morgan 1968, p.7, Slater’s Directory 1858 – 1859, & Looker-on 29/4/1871 p.263

over the horizon and the label of Garden Town was attached as early as 1850³¹⁸. Its streets were spacious and lined with trees, there were numerous well-kept parks and garden squares, and the Pittville Spa was a particularly attractive feature, certainly in the eyes of The Cheltenham Looker-on. In May 1861 the journal waxed lyrical as the winter, Cold Companion to the Merry Month, took its leave and the seasons changed:

“Cheltenham, of all the towns in her Majesty’s dominions, has most reason to feel proud of the change; for her walks and promenades have again assumed the green garniture of spring, evoking pleasant memories of by-gone daysCheltenham in the month of May is justly entitled to the pre-eminence ascribed it, and which it has long enjoyed as “the Garden Town of England”....The gardens and pleasure grounds of [*the Pittville*] Spa are also now at their most beautiful period, the fresh verdure and foliage of May, and the fragrance of the lilac, the hawthorn, and the mountain ash combining to render them scenes of peculiar loveliness”³¹⁹.

The town enjoyed a strong national standing but it was in competition with other spa towns and resorts and its tradesmen were well aware that it had to look to its laurels and work to maintain its status; leisure activities had special importance and sport meant business.

The story of the development of lawn tennis in Cheltenham can best begin with two men, one a former Indian Army officer and a gentleman, the other a remarkably enterprising tradesman and cricket professional, social opposites to a great extent. The former was the principal founder of the Cheltenham Croquet Club in 1869, mastermind in 1875 of the staging of a lawn tennis tournament on its Montpellier Gardens’ lawns, a prime mover behind the formation of a lawn tennis club, and in 1876 honorary secretary and organiser of two further tennis tournaments in Montpellier Gardens³²⁰. The latter managed the playing fields at Cheltenham College from 1856 to 1880 as the school’s cricket coach, introduced the Indian Lawn Game of Badminton or Lawn Racquets into England in 1873³²¹, sold Lawn Tennis sets from his sports shop from 1874, and, starting at the end of 1877, developed Cheltenham’s hard court and indoor tennis facilities as manager of the roller-skating rinks in the Imperial Gardens³²²; he became co-lessee of Montpellier Gardens in April 1881 and hosted Cheltenham’s first open grass court tournament there the following September³²³. The gentleman was called Arthur Lillie and the player James Lillywhite.

In the world of cricket, the name of Lillywhite was famous by the time James was of an age to wield a full size bat. He was born in 1825 to William, a professional cricketer who played first class cricket for many years, mainly for Sussex. Old Lilly was a pioneer of round-arm bowling which dealt the death blow to under-arm bowling, and was recognised by the cricket establishment in his lifetime as its leading exponent, being accorded the title the Nonpareil Bowler³²⁴. From 1844 until his death ten years later he was employed as a bowler by the Marylebone Cricket Club of St John’s Wood (“MCC”) and he supplemented his income by establishing a cricket outfitters store in London as well as coaching cricket at Winchester

³¹⁸ Looker-on 13/4/1850 p.232

³¹⁹ Looker-on 18/5/1861, p.320

³²⁰ See this chapter below “Arthur Lillie, society matrons and croquet” for 1869 - 1875. For 1876: Looker-on 6/5/1876 p.297 & 13/5/1876 p.312; 3/6/1876 p.1 & 24/6/1876 p.410

³²¹ See this chapter below – next page; 1877 manager: Looker-on 22/12/1877 p1. Badminton: Looker-on 7/6/1873 p.355, Perry Robinson letter in Times 10/6/1927 p.10 etc.

³²² Tennis sets: Looker-on 12/9/1874 p.601 etc. Manager skating: Looker-on 16/6/1877 p.1, Chelt Chronicle 1/1/1878 p.4 & 8/10/1878, p.4.

³²³ Chelt Chronicle 26/4/1881 p.8 & Looker-on 30/4/1881 p.1; Field 24/9/1881 p.461.

³²⁴ ODNB for (Frederick) William Lillywhite 2014

College for some years³²⁵. James was the eldest son and with one of his brothers and a cousin followed in his father's footsteps to the Sussex ground and first class cricket. He too was a bowler but he was a less accomplished player than his relations and was rather left behind by his brother John and cousin James as they both scaled the heights to play for England³²⁶. The year before his first representative game for Sussex he accepted the role of cricket coach at Westminster School in London and on completing three seasons moved on to coach at Eton for a year. From Eton he moved to Marlborough and then in 1854 he accepted a post with the Clydesdale Club of Glasgow³²⁷. Near that time Old Lilly visited Cheltenham College and observing the low standard of the school's cricketers, planted the idea in the minds of the senior pupils that James could ring the changes needed³²⁸. By the beginning of the 1855 season James was coaching the first team³²⁹ and in October that year Cheltenham College formally appointed him to teach the pupils cricket and to "generally superintend the playground" at a salary of fifty two guineas per annum³³⁰. He set up house in Cheltenham with his wife Eliza and daughter Fanny and was to spend the rest of his life there³³¹.

James arrived with impeccable connections in the cricket world through his family and some six years coaching experience, mostly with public school boys. His county cricket career with Sussex was brought to a premature close in 1855 through injury and he was able to concentrate his energies on the college and its sports³³². His brother John was cricket coach at Rugby from 1850 to 1856³³³ and the family public school contacts embraced a remarkable proportion of the leading schools – in fact most of the famous sporting schools apart from Harrow. The name Lillywhite was synonymous with cricket, mainly because of family exploits on the field of play but also because from 1844 family members published well-regarded cricket guides and annuals under the Lillywhite name³³⁴ and ran leading cricket and sports outfitters (- Lillywhite & Sons displayed their cricket wares at the Great Exhibition of 1851³³⁵). From 1872 James himself gave his name to the popular "Red Lilly" annual – *James Lillywhite's Cricketers' Annual* - which was edited by Charles W. Alcock³³⁶. By the late 1840's James was principal partner of Lillywhite & Sons – manufacturer of bats and supplier of "every cricket requisite" based in Islington³³⁷ - and after his father retired from the business he continued in

³²⁵ ODNB for FWL 2014. See also obituary West Sussex Gazette 31/8/1854 p.4 & information from Jack Lillywhite, Florida, curator Lillywhite Family Museum, May 2014.

³²⁶ ODNB for FWL 2014

³²⁷ Obituaries for JL Cheltonian magazine January 1883 & Sportsman 25/11/1882 p.5; Bell's Life 14/7/1850 p.6 (plays for Sussex), & Field 21/1/1854 p.56 (JL is Sussex bowler).

³²⁸ "Lillywhite's Legacy", by Grenville Simons, Wisteria Books 2004, p.17

³²⁹ Looker-on 19/5/1855 p.382/3

³³⁰ G Simons 2004 p.17

³³¹ Census 1861 for JL – daughter Sarah born in Cheltenham 1859

³³² Cheltonian magazine obituary Jan 1883. Paul Ward in "Reminiscences of Cheltenham College", 1868, p.63 (HC, G.4) refers to the loss of sight in one eye; Jack Lillywhite (16/9/2015) says his right eye. AD Taylor, 1906, refers to "an accident" cutting short his career as a player ("Cheltenham Cricket Week 1878 - 1905").

³³³ Obituary for John L Birmingham Daily Post 29/10/1874 p.7 (per *Sporting Life*) etc

³³⁴ Eg. William L 1844 - "Lillywhite's Cricketer's Manual" (The Era 5/5/1844 p.1); John L 1865 – "John Lillywhite's Cricketers' Companion (Bell's Life 11/3/1865 p.2); James L junior 1883 – "James Lillywhite's Cricketers' Companion (Field 13/1/1883 p.50 – inc. ref to James senior's death).

³³⁵ Bell's Life 16/2/1851 p.2 & Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition p.136 ("Cricket Bats etc" section, 196). See also advertisement in Chelt Chronicle 23/2/1869 p.4.

³³⁶ Yorkshire Post 23/1/1872 p.3 etc; Field 13/1/1883 p.50; Jack Lillywhite, Florida, email 22 May 2014.

³³⁷ Sporting Life 19/9/1866 p.1 (principal partner, 20 years); Bell's Life 17/3/1850 p.2, 16/2/1851 p.2, 30/3/1851 p.2

partnership with brothers John and Fred, trading as Lillywhite Brothers and Co, until his move to Cheltenham³³⁸.

The word playground has a primary school feel to it but in the case of Cheltenham College in the early 1860's it comprised an area of around seventeen acres (enough for about four cricket pitches) and embraced gymnastics equipment, two outdoor Rackets courts, four or so Fives courts and "tuck stalls" supplying food and drink (meat and fruit pies, salads on match days and a range of refreshments)³³⁹. De facto James was managing the school's facilities as they developed for cricket, football, athletics, gymnastics, rackets and fives. With some ten years experience of supplying sports equipment in London behind him, he was soon supplementing his income from sports retailing in Cheltenham and he took up residence in a shop with living accommodation called Boswell Cottage, at the back of 21 Montpellier Terrace³⁴⁰. In a newspaper advertisement of 1861 he introduced himself as "Teacher of Cricket, Rackets etc at Cheltenham College" and offered for sale from his shop all manner of cricket equipment, racket bats, balls, shoes and presses, and boxing gloves, dumb bells, "Quoits &c"³⁴¹. By 1865 his retail business had expanded to such an extent that he had to trade up from his cottage-shop to a terrace house on three floors in a shopping parade just past the end of the Promenade - 3 Queen's Circus³⁴². Here, luxuriating in the extra space, he branched out from his principal sports and was soon advertising billiard and bagatelle tables as well as ice-skates, archery and croquet equipment, and even marquees and tents³⁴³. He was to remain cricket coach at the College until 1880 and he kept his home at 3 Queen's Circus until his death there in 1882³⁴⁴.

In 1855 the College had taken a major step towards raising its standard of cricket to the level of other leading public schools, and some eight years later it decided to put money into bricks and mortar to bring its general sports facilities up to scratch. It built a sports centre at the edge of the playing fields on the Thirlestaine Road side and The Gymnasium opened for business in 1864. This imposing building, described by the Cheltenham Chronicle as being of a Byzantine style of architecture, was reminiscent in appearance of both church and railway station. It was much wider than deep - 250 feet long with twin towers, each containing a water-tank - and built chiefly of white brick from the Wolverhampton area. It offered a gym 80 feet by 40 (well ventilated and equipped with "every approved appliance for gymnastic exercise"), two covered rackets courts each 65 by 33 feet, a fencing room or school of arms, two rooms for cricketers, two refreshment rooms and two changing rooms³⁴⁵. A spacious balcony gave a fine view of the sports pitches and was said to be able to accommodate two hundred people. Altogether, it was an impressive symbol of the school's commitment to sport and muscular activity. Soon after its construction a Sergeant Griffiths was employed to provide tuition in gymnastics and James's empire had grown dramatically³⁴⁶.

³³⁸ Bell's Life 18/4/1852 p.1 (Lillywhite Bros advertisement). The Lillywhite Brothers and Co. partnership was dissolved early in 1856 (Morning Post 2/2/1856 p.7).

³³⁹ "Chelt College Register, 1841 - 1927", ES Skirving, 1928, p.xiii (re. 1852/53); Morgan 1968 p.23/24 (tuck stalls), p.26 & 27; Simons 2004 p.19; CC Register 1910, CC map 1909 (facing title page).

³⁴⁰ Chelt Examiner 11/4/1860 p.5 (advertisement for sale) & 7/3/1866 p.4 (Suffolk Parade given as road); JL & family census 1861 (ACU).

³⁴¹ Looker-on 9/2/1861 p.90; Chelt Examiner 19/3/1856 p.4

³⁴² Looker-on 12/8/1865 p.506. JL & family census 1871 (ACU).

³⁴³ Looker-on 17/3/1866 p.176 & 15/12/1866 p.809

³⁴⁴ Field obituary 2/12/1882 p.796 etc

³⁴⁵ Chelt Chronicle 26/1/1864 p.5 & Field 16/4/1864 p.277

³⁴⁶ Chelt Examiner 11/5/1864 p.2 (Griffiths); Chelt Chronicle 22/8/1865 p.5; Chronicle 2/10/1866 p.5 (JL manager); G Simons 2004 p.21 & 23 (JL manager). Per census 1871, Thomas Griffiths taught fencing as well as gymnastics (ACU).



7.1 Queen's Circus, December 2013. Looking left to right, No.3 is evidently the first house down from *KITCHENER*³⁴⁷. Continuing on up the road, the south side of the Renshaw villa can be seen behind the lamppost and bus. It was a very short walk for a restring.

James was universally well-liked - popular with boys and masters alike - being blessed with “unvarying amiability and good humour” and he seems to have combined the virtues of manliness and honesty with the skills of diplomacy³⁴⁸. He could communicate at all levels. Alfred Taylor, in his *Brief History of the Cheltenham Cricket Week* describes him as “unpretentious and unostentatious in all he did” and this was undoubtedly necessary in one who, as a cricket professional and tradesman, was low in the social hierarchy but found himself leading and managing amongst the gentry. To be assertive from a socially subordinate position he had to charm and persuade rather than confront and be seen to dominate. It is impossible to say how great a part he played in the conception and planning of the gymnasium but it is likely that he was highly influential and his obituary in *The Cheltonian* magazine in 1883 indicates that he was the driving force behind the building of the two covered rackets courts³⁴⁹. Two courts was to prove excessive but the logic according to James was to provide one court for masters and prefects and another for the juniors³⁵⁰. The Reid brothers and tennis players Arthur Myers and Henry Porter would probably have acquired their rackets skills under James’s watchful eye but early in 1870 George Gray was recruited to work as rackets professional and he was to cover four seasons at the college, broadly the years of Ernest

³⁴⁷See also illustration G Simons 2004, p.53

³⁴⁸“Cheltenham Cricket Week 1878 to 1905”, AD Taylor, Chelt. N’paper Co, 1906, “Brief History” (HC), Obituary Chelt Chronicle 28/11/1882 p.4 etc.

³⁴⁹The Cheltonian, January 1883, “In Memoriam”: “....he also got us our racquets and fives courts, and the perfect turf on the XI ground is owing to his careful nursing.”

³⁵⁰Chelt Chronicle 22/8/1865 p.5

Browne and the Renshaws³⁵¹. He was succeeded by William Newman, a young man in his early twenties³⁵².

Like James, George Gray was a scion of an illustrious sporting family – the Grays of Cambridge who then headed the ranks of professional rackets players³⁵³. His eldest brother Henry had been world champion for several years until his retirement in 1866; brother William then inherited the crown and was employed as the professional at Eton until his death in 1875; brother Joseph was the professional at Rugby and became champion in 1878³⁵⁴; youngest brother Walter was Harrow's professional until 1876 and challenged for the world crown in 1888³⁵⁵; and George, just a year older than Walter, was considered to be an excellent player but perhaps not quite in the same league as Joseph and Walter³⁵⁶. He was only seventeen when he arrived at Cheltenham and would have been fortunate to work as assistant to such a talented and experienced coach as James³⁵⁷. His presence was a further reflection of the school's sporting ambitions and the quality of James's contacts. In April 1873 a match was played at Eton which pitted the rackets "instructors" of Cheltenham and Eton against those of Rugby and Harrow: four Gray brothers competed in a doubles match – George & William (reigning world champion) versus Walter & Joseph³⁵⁸. According to the match report in *The Morning Post*, in an exciting and closely fought contest Cheltenham & Eton narrowly beat Harrow & Rugby. It would seem to be more than a coincidence that at the first Wimbledon Championships of 1877, the six competitors who survived to the third round were all educated at these schools, and in 1878 four of the five survivors to the fourth round were from the same four establishments³⁵⁹; the fifth - an interloper from Repton – was Herbert Lawford.

James's ambitions as a sports and leisure activity equipment retailer extended well beyond Cheltenham and by 1868 he could advertise himself as supplier to the army and navy, clubs and schools generally, and a royal customer or two - the heirs to the thrones of England and France ("by appointment to the Prince of Wales" and the Prince Imperial)³⁶⁰. Advertisements could now be decorated with a crown, at least for a year or two, and in 1874 he added the Civil Service to his honours list³⁶¹. He labelled himself an "Importer and Manufacturer of all articles used in British Sports and Games"³⁶². In 1866 he had expanded into operations in London and opened a manufactory and sales outlet at 4 Newington Causeway, just south of London Bridge:

³⁵¹ Karl Cook, master at CC: email on history of rackets at Cheltenham 22/9/2010 & "Rackets at Cheltenham College Through The Years" 2014; also see census 1871 for George Gray, "Racquet Master", Cheltenham, aged 18. Henry Porter would have had one season with Gray – 1870 – but Arthur Myers had left in 1869. The youngest Reid – James – left in 1868 (CC Register p.281)

³⁵² W Newman was in place as Gray's replacement by April 1876 (*Illustrated Sporting News* 22/4/1876 p.75). See also *Sporting Life* 16/4/1879 p.1. Census 1881 shows him resident in Cheltenham as "Instructor of Racquets". In census 1891 he was still a Cheltenham teacher of racquets (ACU).

³⁵³ Badminton Library, "Rackets", Alfred Lyttelton p.368 – 370, E.O. Pleydell-Bouverie, p.370 to 374

³⁵⁴ *Field* 22/1/1876 p.88 & Tennis & Rackets Association website www.tennisandrackets.com, "World Singles Championship", 11/1/2021

³⁵⁵ "Harrow School", Howson & Warner, E. Arnold 1898 p.254 & Website T&R Assoc, 11/1/2021

³⁵⁶ Badminton Library, "Rackets" p.373

³⁵⁷ Census GG 1871

³⁵⁸ *Morning Post* 21/4/1873 p.3

³⁵⁹ 1878: Erskine (Rugby), Hamilton (Eton), Hadow (Harrow), and Myers (Cheltenham). [School registers & Todd 1979 p.219 & 220.]

³⁶⁰ *Chelt Chronicle* 12/5/1868 p.4. The French prince was heir to the French throne and just twelve years old at the time (*Morning Post* 17/3/1856 p.5); he was resident in France and one can only guess at the nature of sports supplies from England, although in the opinion of one newspaper he spoke English "as purely as an Eton boy and [was] as familiar with all our national games" (*Bell's Life* 24/7/1869 p.3).

³⁶¹ *JL Cricketer's Annual* 1874 - JL advertisement for his "Cricket, Football and British Sport Depot"

³⁶² *Chelt Chronicle* 12/5/1868 p.4

“Messrs. Lillywhite and Co. beg to announce to their patrons and the cricketing world that they have opened extensive premises at 4 Newington Causeway, Borough, with a splendid stock of all kinds of cricketing goods and every article of British sports..... Go to Lillywhite and Co’s for Bats, Balls, Stumps, Gloves, Leg-guards, Croquet, Footballs, Boxing Gloves, Shirts, Caps &c. &c. &c. All goods made on the premises, and can be seen in process of manufacture....”³⁶³

In this venture he was joined by one George Frowd at the beginning of the seventies and their business of *James Lillywhite, Frowd & Co* first made a splash in the London press in April 1872 with multiple advertisements in *Sporting Life*³⁶⁴. The change of brand name in 1872, however, seems to have been part of a planned withdrawal by James and on 1st January 1873 the partnership with Frowd was dissolved on the basis that James would leave but the business would continue, name unchanged³⁶⁵. James had started his cricketer’s annual at the beginning of 1872 and curiously ownership seems to have been vested in the new company so that thereafter the Red Lilly was published by Lillywhite Frowd³⁶⁶.

Looking back it is far from obvious why James should invest in a London operation for this period of six years, but the answer could lie in a collapse in the fortunes of some close family. In the early 1860’s the livelihoods of his mother Charlotte, his sister Ellen and his brother Fred were based on the business of cricket outfitting³⁶⁷, although Fred was also a well-known cricket journalist³⁶⁸. In 1863 Ellen married Thomas Ward, a manager in the cricket outfitting trade working with Fred, and the next year her husband and brother set up a partnership with its principal base in Borough high street³⁶⁹. The firm *Fred Lillywhite and Ward*, “under the patronage of the Marylebone, Sussex, Surrey and other county cricket clubs”, established itself in London and later Brighton selling cricket and all manner of sporting equipment together with Fred’s cricket publications³⁷⁰. Unfortunately the initiative seems to have coincided with a self-destructive phase in Fred’s life and the business soon failed. On 7th May 1866 the cricket outfitters dissolved their partnership by mutual consent³⁷¹ and in June Fred and Thomas were adjudicated bankrupt³⁷². James’s announcement that Lillywhite & Co were opening extensive premises at 4 Newington Causeway, Borough, with a wide range of cricketing goods on offer, appeared in *Sporting Life* on 21st July. It is hard to believe this was just a coincidence – the new Lillywhite cricket outfitter in place less than a mile from the old just a month or so after the descent into bankruptcy – and it seems likely the eldest son was launching a lifeboat for his mother and sister. When the new business was up and running with an able local proprietor at the controls, James bowed out³⁷³. If that was the rationale for his

³⁶³ *Sporting Life* 21/7/1866 p.1 (for quote) & *Sportsman* 25/8/1866 p.2 (in August the company name given was James Lillywhite, Brett and Co). Also *Chelt Chronicle* 23/2/1869 p.4

³⁶⁴ *Sporting Life* 20/4/1872 p.4

³⁶⁵ *London Gazette* 14/3/1873 p.1524

³⁶⁶ *Field* 3/2/1872 p.101 & 13/1/1883 p.50, *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* 25/1/1872 p.4; *Sporting Life* 5/2/1873 p.1 (publisher), *Sportsman* 3/1/1874 p.1.

³⁶⁷ Census 1861 for Charlotte, Ellen, Fred & Thomas Ward, all resident at 15 Kennington Oval. Charlotte is shown as “head” of household.

³⁶⁸ “Memoir” of Fred Lillywhite, *Brighton Gazette* 18/10/1866 p.3 (& other journals)

³⁶⁹ “Memoir” *Brighton Gazette* 18/10/1866 p.3

³⁷⁰ *Brighton Gazette* 12/1/1865 p.8 & 30/3/1865 p.8; *Sportsman* 31/10/1865 p.1.

³⁷¹ *London Gazette* 25/5/1866 p.3150

³⁷² *Perry’s Bankrupts* 21/7/1866 p.601 & *London Gazette* 17/12/1869 p.7214

³⁷³ By 1866 Ellen had a son Thomas, aged one, and it seems likely that Thomas senior was employed by the new firm (still “cricketing outfitter” in birth record 28/8/1864 [ACU]). James would have left Fred to his own devices and he died in September 1866. His mother Charlotte died in 1870.

temporary return to London operations, then it says much for him - dutiful son, benevolent brother.

James Lillywhite Frowd was to prosper under the management of the Frowd family and it survived for over a hundred years, faithful to the name of its principal founder (and still selling bats and balls in the 1960's)³⁷⁴.

The manufacture of Lillywhite products in-house would have begun with cricket and rackets equipment in the days of the Lillywhite and Sons Islington business³⁷⁵. Production would have been sustained by James and John during their school employments in the fifties and then the range would have been expanded in the sixties, most notably with the development of the Borough manufactory. In Cheltenham in 1871 James advertised Lillywhite cricket bats as well as a James Lillywhite croquet mallet (the Green Hart Spring Handle Mallet), and - improbably - Lillywhite cross-bows³⁷⁶. After James's withdrawal from Lillywhite Frowd at the end of 1872 his interest in Lillywhite products would have declined and from 1873 in the main the only home-grown products he advertised were "Lillywhite's Cricket and Racquet Goods"³⁷⁷. A notable exception to this, however, was his kit for the game of "Badminton or Lawn Racquets" which he advertised for sale in June 1873 as "The New Out Door Indian Lawn Game"³⁷⁸. This kit – comprising "every requisite of the game" plus registered rules at three guineas for a Best Quality set - declared itself to be a British first and James advertised nationally in *The Field* and *Sporting Gazette* as well as in Cheltenham's newspapers³⁷⁹. Badminton had apparently spawned an All England Badminton Club by September 1874³⁸⁰ and at the beginning of 1875 the All England Croquet Club, Wimbledon, formally advised its members that its activities now embraced Badminton (- soon shuttlecocks could be purchased from the club gardener)³⁸¹. The game may be seen as a precursor to Lawn Tennis – it was the racket lawn game taster for fashionable society. James's 1873 launch of a badminton set would have caught the eye of Major Clopton Wingfield and in company with reports of the burgeoning popularity of the game in India, may well have spurred the major into producing and marketing his own lawn game³⁸². March 1874 saw Wingfield's agent French & Co take space in the *Sporting Gazette* to offer for sale kits for the new game of Sphairistike Or Lawn Tennis – a boxed set for five guineas comprising "A tennis court with four tennis bats and a supply of balls" (the "court" being a centre net with support poles, two triangular "wing or side-nettings", guy ropes, assorted pegs, a wooden mallet and a brush to paint lines)³⁸³. It was pricier than badminton by far but a much better outdoor game.

³⁷⁴ Kent & Sussex Courier 27/11/1964 p.6 (head office move to Tonbridge), Herald 17/1/1962 p.9 (Tonbridge strike).

³⁷⁵ Bell's Life 30/3/1851 p.2

³⁷⁶ Chelt Chronicle 9/5/1871 p.1, & 31/10/1871 p.8 (cross-bows)

³⁷⁷ Chronicle 25/3/1873 p.1 & 9/9/1873 p.1

³⁷⁸ Looker-on 7/6/1873 p.355

³⁷⁹ Chronicle 11/11/1873 p.1 & 6/1/1874 p.1 ("introduced in this country solely by him") & advertisement in 1874 Red Lilly annual (price 3guineas) (published in December 1873 [*The Sportsman* 3/1/1874 p.1]) *Field* 18/10/1873 p.410 & *Sporting Gazette* 1/11/1873 p.1 etc

³⁸⁰ *Field* 19/9/1874 p.322: Jefferies of Woolwich proclaimed itself supplier of shuttlecocks to "the All England Badminton Club". In a letter to *Field* 21/3/1874 p.201, JH Hale - a founder member of AECC - suggested croquet clubs introduce "Badminton" played with rubber balls - "to be returned as at tennis" - to help revive their fortunes (JHH per Todd 1979 p.80 & 88).

³⁸¹ Todd 1979 p.87, para 2: AECC issued a notice to members dated 25/2/1875 to the effect that a ground would be set aside "for Lawn Tennis and Badminton during the season..."; para 4: shuttlecocks from April 1875.

³⁸² *Times of India* 3/2/1873 p. 3, *Friend of India* 10/7/1873 p.771 etc. In a clip for Simla dated June 1873 *The Homeward Mail* reported an acute shortage of shuttlecocks and battledores because of a sort of mania for Badminton "amongst her majesty's lieges" – "everybody wants the means of playing and few can be satisfied" (4/8/1873 p.789).

Badminton's development from Shuttlecock-and-battledore into a game for adults in which a shuttlecock is hit to-and-fro across a net with a bat or light racket, is generally credited to family and friends of the Duke of Beaufort on his estate in Gloucestershire. Legend has it that a guest at Badminton House in the years before 1860³⁸⁴ professed himself unable to ride, shoot, fish or dance and so attracted the disapproval of the duke, who called upon him to invent a new game as penance for his social shortcomings³⁸⁵. To appease his host, and possibly to hide his shame, the guest locked himself into his room and emerged only when he had completed the design of the new pastime. The duke was suitably impressed, the game was tested and christened, and the guest returned to favour. However, the date of the house party is unknown and neither the duke in question nor his guest have been identified - we are left just with the certainty of the name.

Badminton House is no more than thirty miles from Cheltenham as the crow flies but the game apparently travelled to 3 Queen's Circus via the sub-continent of India, where the design had evolved from its Gloucestershire origins and a body of rules had been developed which was popular and widely used³⁸⁶. At the end of January 1873 *The Times of India* published a summary of the Indian rules, in company with the ducal anecdote, and by July *The Friend of India* could report that badminton was "established from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin...[and] played as far north as Simla and as far south as Trevandrum" (- in November *The Morning Post* referred to Simla as "that home of balls and Badminton")³⁸⁷. James asserted in some of his advertisements that he had registered the Indian rules, and was their sole introducer in Britain³⁸⁸, and in July his marketing bore fruit with reports in a number of provincial newspapers replicating a *Court Journal* snippet on the introduction of the new game³⁸⁹. As his initial marketing ploy for lawn tennis, Wingfield was to plant his *Book of the Game* instructions with the same journal together with the *Sporting Gazette* and two others³⁹⁰. James's education in badminton apparently took place in the garden of a Cheltenham resident home on leave from India. An Indian Army chaplain by the name of Julian Robinson had shipped a set of the Indian game with him back to England and he erected it in his garden for the entertainment of his children. The year according to his son Perry, then about ten years old, was 1868 or 1869³⁹¹.

Perry had strong memories of James's visit to the family home because James was still a cricketer as far as he was concerned ("though a shopkeeper"). In a letter to *The Times* in 1927 he described how the sportsman arrived soon after the court was marked out and he observed Perry's elder siblings in play. He then "took the necessary measurements &c and the firm of Lillywhite started to make badminton sets and put the game on the English market".

³⁸³ *Sporting Gazette* 14/3/1874 p.239 (& see edition for 7/3/1874). *Field* 21/3/1874 p.270. Contents of box sets: Alexander biography of Wingfield, 1986, p.205 to 214, "Book of the Game" included in box (p.214); "The Book" was first printed 25th Feb and circulated to selected journals at the beginning of March (Alexander p.88/89).

³⁸⁴ Commercial use of the name *Badminton Battledore* is known to have been documented by 1860 (Todd 1979 p.37, para 2): in October 1860 a toymaker by the name of Isaac Spratt published a booklet headed "Badminton Battledore - A New Game".

³⁸⁵ "The Popular Recreator", Cassell, 1873/74 Vol. 2, p.324 ("Indian Badminton, or Lawn Racquets" section published in Feb/March 1874 [*Naval & Mil' Gazette* 7/3/1874 p.158]), *Times of India* 3/2/1873 p.3

³⁸⁶ *Popular Recreator* p.324

³⁸⁷ *Times of India* 3/2/1873 p.3, *Friend of India* 10/7/1873 p.771, *Morning Post* 18/11/1873 p.6

³⁸⁸ *Chronicle* 11/11/1873 p.1 & *Looker-on* 7/6/1873 p.355

³⁸⁹ Eg. the *Bath Chronicle* 24/7/1873 p.2, *Tamworth Herald*, 26/7/1873 p.2: "A new game of battledore and shuttlecock has been introduced, called "Badminton," in honour of that ducal mansion, in which it was first played. It is an amusing game...On a rainy day in a country house it furnishes many an hour's amusement attended with exercise...— *Court Journal*."

³⁹⁰ Alexander 1986 p.89 to 91 & *Sporting Gazette* 14/3/1874 p.239

³⁹¹ Letter to *The Times*, 10/6/1927 p.10, H. Perry Robinson

Perry was writing on the subject of the origins of Lawn Tennis and he went on to express the view that Wingfield's game was derived from Indian Badminton³⁹². It was always accepted in the Robinson family that Sphairistike was conceived from the study of a Lillywhite badminton set (which was a copy of the Robinson set), and their view was so well established that Perry had no doubt they received the information from James himself³⁹³. Perry was a credible witness. After education at Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford, he embarked on a career as a journalist and author and was based in the US for many years before assisting with McKinley's presidential campaign in 1896³⁹⁴. On returning to England he became a correspondent for The Times and as an author wrote most memorably on naturalist topics. During the First World War he was appointed The Times official war correspondent and subsequently was honoured with a KBE for war services³⁹⁵. His employer judged that "As an annalist of the war his accuracy about details was the reward of very great industry and precision"³⁹⁶.

In March 1873 Cassell, Petter & Gilpin began publication of a weekly leisure activities magazine called "The Popular Recreator" which had the aim of providing a guide to indoor and outdoor amusements for both young and old. Its scope was vast and over a year it covered all manner of games and hobbies from mainstream sports such as cricket, angling and golf to card games, egg collecting, paper-flower making and window-gardening³⁹⁷. At the beginning of 1874, amongst articles on firework-making, magic lantern, legerdemain, marbles, forfeits and twenty or so other recreations, it included an essay on "Indian Badminton or Lawn Racquets"³⁹⁸. The writer of the piece seems to have taken his title straight from James's 1874 cricket annual (just published) and drawn most of his information from James, who he introduces as "the well known Mr James Lillywhite from Cheltenham", the man who received into his hands the rules from India³⁹⁹. The Duke of Beaufort's role in the birth of the game is described first of all, a diagram of the court with measurements laid out and then the rules of the game described. The article finishes by mentioning "four further rules...given by Mr Lillywhite" which were added "by his permission". The piece is indicative of James's standing on the national sporting stage even before he was acclaimed for his cricketing initiatives in Cheltenham. It has to be said, though, that despite badminton's initial favourable reception at the All England Club, by June 1876 it had been pushed into the shadows by lawn tennis and the swish of shuttlecocks was to be heard no more in the green pastures of Worple Road⁴⁰⁰. If the launch of badminton sets was a damp squib for James he probably shed only a few tears. The Robinsons had introduced him to the game in 1868/69 and he waited several years before investing in its promotion. His prompt to market a kit in 1873 was probably reports of the game's popularity in India, and possibly his perception of the decline of croquet, but the financial outlook for the line would have been limited and he had other irons in the fire.

In 1869 James added Newton Wilson bicycles to his list of products for sale or hire and to promote his new line, he engaged *The Velocipedian Ducrow* – Mr C.A. Booth, champion

³⁹² Perry was not alone in this view – see article in the Morning Post 27/3/1875 p.5, which described lawn tennis as evolving from Badminton before Wingfield "introduced it to the public".

³⁹³ Times letter 10/6/1927 p.10

³⁹⁴ The Times 22/12/1930 p.17, obituary of Sir Harry Perry Robinson.

³⁹⁵ Edinburgh Gazette 1/4/1920 p.896. Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (Civil Division). Also received the Legion of Honour (Times obituary).

³⁹⁶ Times obituary 22/12/1930 p.17

³⁹⁷ The Era 16/3/1873 p.2 & Pall Mall Gazette 2/6/1874 p.12

³⁹⁸ Naval & Military Gazette 7/3/1874 p.158

³⁹⁹ "The Popular Recreator", Cassell Petter & Galpin, 1874 Vol. 2, p.324 & 325. The series was completed in 1874 and published as two volumes of about 400 pages each (Naval & Mil Gazette 7/3/1874 p.158).

⁴⁰⁰ Todd 1879 p.88

bicycle performer – to parade his cycling skills at the Town Hall and offer lessons⁴⁰¹. The bicycles sold for between five and twenty guineas, depending on model and finish⁴⁰². The promotion involved hiring the hall over three days in October and incurring the “very great expense” of Mr Booth’s services, so no one could accuse James of being shy of commercial risk. His financial commitment went even further. In November he announced the opening of a Lillywhite Velocipede School at the Town Hall with subscriptions available for a facility that was open from 10am to 9pm, was “comfortably warmed and lighted” and was served by a dressing room and lavatory⁴⁰³. Subscriptions could be quarterly or yearly and included use of the hall for practice, admission to all bicycle entertainments, and the boon of reduced hire and purchase rates for bicycles. How long the school survived is unknown but James was still offering bicycles for hire by the hour in November 1870 and he retained a tenancy of the hall of sorts as late as September 1871 (when he was reported to have made a free loan of the hall for preparations for a visit by the Gloucestershire Agricultural Society⁴⁰⁴). From the end of 1873, James was hiring the hall again for a new pastime that caught the fancy of a wider public – roller-skating⁴⁰⁵.

1870 saw James take on the role of impresario. At the end of June the nobility, gentry and public of Cheltenham were respectfully informed that James had arranged a Grand Fete and Open Air Concert in Pittville Gardens to commemorate the opening of Pittville Spa in July 1830⁴⁰⁶. The Era described the fete as being under his auspices together with “a party of local gentlemen” and the financial risk was apparently spread across a management committee of promoters⁴⁰⁷. Top of the bill was a gas balloon ascent by W.H. Adams, the celebrated aeronaut, and there were a wide variety of entertainments such as a Chinese conjurer/juggler, a popular comedian, the three Indians (and their marvellous feats on the oscillating rope), solo singers and a display of electric light, while the band of the Grenadier Guards was engaged to provide a splendid accompaniment⁴⁰⁸. Special trains ran from Bristol, Swindon and South Wales and the town closed for business at 2pm so popular was the occasion; upwards of 15,000 people are said to have attended⁴⁰⁹. The Era pronounced the fete the greatest entertainment that the public of Cheltenham had ever had the opportunity to patronise, but the *Chronicle* was less generous and condemned the fete committee for failing to provide value for money – the balloon (the *Robin Hood*) had failed to ascend (because, it was rumoured, there was a hole in its top and as gas was pumped in, so it came out and the balloon failed to inflate), and there was little grand about the entertainment other than the Grenadier Guards⁴¹⁰. Criticism or no, and even the *Chronicle* acknowledged that the fete was well planned, the work seems to have appealed to James and during the seventies the management of events and sports facilities for the public came to occupy an ever-increasing proportion of his time.

1872 was the year of two cricket initiatives that were to be enduring successes for James. In January he published for the first time his cricket annual, providing a review of the previous year. This first edition of *James Lillywhite’s Cricketers’ Annual* was edited by Charles

⁴⁰¹ Looker-on 18/9/1869 p.596; *Chronicle* 12/10/1869 p.5 & 19/10/1869 p.1. In April 1869 Booth was reported to have set a record of 7.5 hours for the London to Brighton run of 52 miles (*Chelt Examiner* 21/4/1869 p.3) and after performances in London theatres, he subsequently embarked on a provincial tour taking in Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool etc (*Era* 13/6/1869 p.16).

⁴⁰² *Army & Navy Gazette* 2/10/1869 p.632

⁴⁰³ Looker-on 20/11/1869 p.740; also *Chronicle* 14/12/1869 p.1.

⁴⁰⁴ *Chronicle* 29/11/1870 p.1 & 5/9/1871 p.2; see Looker-on 17/9/1870 p.601 (hall lent by JL for a charity)

⁴⁰⁵ Looker-on 27/12/1873 p.824, *Chelt Chronicle* 30/12/1873 p.5

⁴⁰⁶ Looker-on 2/7/1870 p.1, *Chelt Examiner* 29/6/1870 p.4, *Western Daily Press*, 9/7/1870 p.1

⁴⁰⁷ *The Era*, 24/7/1870, p.12, JL letters to *Chelt Examiner* 27/7/1870 p.8

⁴⁰⁸ *Western Daily Press*, 9/7/1870 p.1 etc

⁴⁰⁹ *The Era* 24/7/1870 p.12

⁴¹⁰ *Chronicle* 26/7/1870 p.8

William Alcock (who provided the cricket section for Cassell's *Popular Recreator* in 1873) and it included contributions from the celebrated W.G. Grace on batting, Southerton on bowling and James himself on the laws of cricket⁴¹¹. The cast was impressive. After education at Harrow, Alcock devoted his life to sport as an amateur player of football and cricket, as a writer, and most importantly as an innovative administrator and manager in his two main sports⁴¹². In 1866, at the age of twenty three, he was appointed to the committee of the recently formed Football Association and in 1870 he became honorary secretary and treasurer; the FA cup – the national knockout competition - was his conception in 1871⁴¹³. By his late twenties he was writing for *The Field* and *The Sportsman*. James recruited him as editor shortly before his appointment as secretary to Surrey County Cricket Club in 1872 and he was to remain in the saddle with Surrey until his death in 1907. By 1872 he was a respected figure in the sporting world and very much in the swim. James's cricket annual proved popular and continued to be published after his death until 1900⁴¹⁴.

In July 1872 James laid the foundation for Cheltenham's modern cricket festival when he arranged a match on the College ground between the county teams of Gloucestershire and Surrey, and the contest was played out in the presence of a large and brilliant company (in the words of the *Cheltenham Chronicle*)⁴¹⁵. Gloucestershire won rather easily, despite batting star W.G. Grace scoring a mere 15 (dismissed lbw by James Southerton), but the event proved popular and a Gloucester county match was played every year thereafter on the school pitch. The *Chronicle* - James's critic two years before over the poor value of his Pittville Gardens event - was now fulsome in its praise:

“All the arrangements of the meeting were carried out in an admirable manner by Mr Lillywhite, who is entitled to much praise for obtaining such a treat for the lovers of cricket in this county, and we hope the attendance both on Thursday and Friday will have been sufficient to recoup him for the large outlay he must have incurred, together with a sufficient sum over to make the remembrance of the match a pleasant subject.”⁴¹⁶

In 1877 James proposed an extension of the College ground fixture to two county matches and the county committee gave him the go-ahead⁴¹⁷. Cheltenham Cricket Week was launched in 1878 and in mid August Gloucestershire played Sussex then Yorkshire over a six day period⁴¹⁸. The financial arrangement was that the committee paid James a fixed fee for organising the event and the rest – gate money less local expenses – was for his account⁴¹⁹. The commercial risk was his - he put his money where his mouth was. The town was fully supportive and Mayor de Ferrierès, who was blessed with a deep pocket, hosted a banquet at the Plough Hotel for the Gloucester team together with the captains of the Sussex and Yorkshire teams, friends, associates and local dignitaries – a multitude of a hundred which included several more mayors, Agg-Gardner MP and of course W.G. Grace (who was placed on de Ferrierès' right hand). In a speech to the assembly the mayor praised James for his ambition to create a cricket week to rival that of Canterbury, and after toasting the Queen and

⁴¹¹Yorkshire Post 23/1/1872 p.3, Sheffield Daily Telegraph 25/1/1872 p.4, Field 3/2/1872 p.101. CWA on Cassell's cricket section: Grantham Jnl 5/4/1873 p.2.

⁴¹² ODNB on CWA 2014, Times obituary 27/2/1907 p.10 (TDA)

⁴¹³ FA website 2014, www.thefa.com

⁴¹⁴ Jack Lillywhite email 22/5/2014 & picture of cover for 1900 edition. Alcock was still editor in 1883 (*Field* 13/1/1883 p.50)

⁴¹⁵ *Chronicle* 23/7/1872 p.5 & www.gloscricket.co.uk/cheltenham-festival 17/2/2021

⁴¹⁶ *Chronicle* 23/7/1872 p.5

⁴¹⁷ G Simons 2004 p.31

⁴¹⁸ G Simons 2004 p.35 – 37 & p.41

⁴¹⁹ G Simons 2004 p.34. His fee was £120.

royal family, he called upon the diners to raise their glasses to the success of the Cricket Week and James Lillywhite; James was cheered when he rose to respond⁴²⁰. De Ferrières was not alone in his appreciation of James's enterprise and the architect, engineer and builder of Cheltenham's cricket festival received wide recognition in the years that followed⁴²¹.

James's appetite and energy for new projects was boundless. After launching Indian Badminton in the first half of 1873, he turned his attention to the newly popular pastime of roller-skating and at the end of the year was promoting the Town Hall as a skating rink⁴²². Plimpton's American Patent Roller Skates were offered for hire in all sizes for men, women and children. Tuition was available for one and all: ladies could learn together free of male attention at exclusive classes in the morning and then there were sessions for all sexes and ages in the afternoon and evening⁴²³. Proceedings on Mondays and Fridays were soon enlivened by the Promenade Band and the hall was smartened up with a new pine floor and tasteful redecoration as James left no stone unturned in an endeavour to make the sport as popular in Cheltenham as it was in Bath and Brighton⁴²⁴. The sport had arrived in England from America some two years earlier and been well received in London, Bath and other large towns, but it was so unfamiliar to the residents of Cheltenham that the *Looker-on* felt obliged to familiarise its readers with the workings of a roller-skate and Mr Plimpton's in particular. In place of an ice-skate's blade, there were four small wheels which enabled the wearer to glide along on the boards almost as freely as an ice-skater on the frozen surface of water, while Mr Plimpton's flexible "upper part" enabled the wearer "to work either in circles or straight lines" as the occasion demanded; it was an invigorating recreation⁴²⁵. Cheltenham was won over, attendances were strong, and the pastime was adjudged to be the fashionable novelty of the winter, affording "amusement by daylight and gaslight to many hundreds of the young and agile of the upper and middle classes of Society"⁴²⁶. It was a commercial success for James and after a first season that ended in April⁴²⁷, he relaunched at the Town Hall at the beginning of November 1874 with a new local band in attendance – the Celebrated Rink Band under the baton of Mr A.G. Pollock, RAM⁴²⁸. The business flourished⁴²⁹ and in February 1875 Mr Plimpton himself – president of the New York Roller Skating Association – was an invited guest at the Town Hall for the promotion of his product; his skating daughters came with him and gave several demonstrations of their skills to the townsfolk, disporting themselves with marvellous ease and grace⁴³⁰.

Roller-skating progressed rapidly from fashionable novelty to established pastime and seemed set for a regular place in the winter calendar. The programme in the town hall for 1874/75 was followed by another for 1875/76, with popularity undiminished in the third season and James still at the helm⁴³¹. Success, however, was accompanied by increased customer expectation and Cheltenham's facilities were soon lagging the field. Large purpose-built skating rinks, suitable for all seasons with both outdoor and indoor skating areas, were springing up in competitor resorts – Brighton, Scarborough, Harrogate, Buxton and even (too

⁴²⁰ *Chelt Chronicle* 27/8/1878 p.5

⁴²¹ Obituaries for JL: *Field* 2/12/1882 p.796, *Sportsman* 25/11/1882 p.5 etc

⁴²² *Chronicle* 30/12/1873 p.5 & *Looker-on* 27/12/1873 p.824

⁴²³ *Chronicle* 6/1/1874 p.4 & 3/2/1874 p.4

⁴²⁴ Band: *Looker-on* 31/1/1874 p.79 & *Chronicle* 3/2/1874 p.4. Floor: *Chronicle* 17/3/1874 p.5.

⁴²⁵ *Looker-on* 13/12/1873 p.792

⁴²⁶ *Looker-on* 31/10/1874 p.707

⁴²⁷ *Looker-on* 11/4/1874 p.246 & 16/5/1874 p.1

⁴²⁸ *Looker-on* 31/10/1874 p.707 & *Chelt Examiner* 25/11/1874 p.4

⁴²⁹ *Examiner* 10/2/1875 p.8

⁴³⁰ *Looker-on* 13/2/1875 p.1 & *Examiner* 24/2/1875 p.8

⁴³¹ *Examiner* 1/9/1875 p.4 & 3/11/1875 p.4; *Looker-on* 23/10/1875 p.674 & 6/11/1875 p.718.

close to home) Malvern⁴³². Cheltenham's venue was small, improvised and feeble in comparison – the Queen of Watering Places deserved better. *The Cheltenham Examiner* railed at Cheltenham's miserly approach to public buildings – "If we want a theatre, we utilise an old Pump Room; and we dignify a barn with the name of Town Hall"⁴³³. There was a consensus that the town should develop state-of-the-art facilities and the burghers of Cheltenham rose to the challenge. Plans were laid for a grand development in Imperial Square – a crystal palace that would provide for skating, shows, concerts, exhibitions and retail extravaganzas – and it was dubbed the Winter Garden project. In October 1876, as the development progressed, James was appointed rink manager for the new Winter Garden and Skating Rink Company⁴³⁴. Skating for the 1876/77 season continued under his able management but was transplanted from the Town Hall to a new and commodious rink in Imperial Square⁴³⁵.

The opening of Cheltenham's Winter Garden timed itself happily to coincide with the growth of lawn tennis after the inaugural Wimbledon championships of 1877. Clopton Wingfield had begun marketing his lawn tennis sets in March 1874 and James was selling sets in Cheltenham some six months later⁴³⁶. Social tennis developed quickly but the serious game waited on the 1877 Wimbledon rules, and with the Winter Garden rinks under his control, James found himself in pole position to introduce the hard court game in Imperial Square at the end of 1877⁴³⁷.

Arthur Lillie, society matrons and croquet

The origins of tournament lawn tennis in Cheltenham were much the same as those in Wimbledon: the game was born in 1875 in a croquet club whose membership was in near terminal decline. This might seem surprising, given the distance between the locations, but England's garden town was nothing if not fashionable and there were close relations between the towns' croquet clubs. In the late sixties serious club croquet was in its infancy and the All England Croquet Club, Wimbledon was the leader of a very small pack⁴³⁸. The two principal founding members of the Cheltenham Croquet Club in 1869 played in the All England Club's early tournaments and by 1871 were both Wimbledon members⁴³⁹. The Reverend Arthur Law, young curate of St Philip and St James's Leckhampton from 1868 to 1870 and a resident of Cheltenham at the time⁴⁴⁰, was one of the historic six who formed the first committee of the All England Croquet Club in July 1868⁴⁴¹. Arthur Lillie, a longer standing Cheltenham resident, was taught the game by Law, competed in the All England Club's first Wimbledon tournament in 1870 and became a member soon after⁴⁴²; he was an associate of the leading All England players and, in particular, became well acquainted with John Hale who published his own rules for lawn tennis in 1874⁴⁴³. A further link between the clubs came through Walter Peel, who

⁴³² Brighton & Scarborough (Chelt Examiner 1/9/1875 p.4), Harrogate & Malvern (Examiner 3/11/1875 p.4), Buxton (Examiner 12/1/1876 p.4)

⁴³³ Chelt Examiner 12/1/1876 p.4

⁴³⁴ Chronicle 21/3/1876 p.3, Looker-on 22/4/1876 p.272 & 24/6/1876 p.410, Chronicle 3/10/1876 p.4 & 7/11/1876 p.4

⁴³⁵ Looker-on 4/11/1876 p.706 & Chronicle 7/11/1876 p.5

⁴³⁶ Looker-on 12/9/1874 p.601

⁴³⁷ Looker-on 22/12/1877 p.1

⁴³⁸ "Croquet – Its History, Rules, and Secrets", Arthur Lillie, Longmans 1897, p.75

⁴³⁹ Lillie 1897 p.75/76; Looker-on 10/7/1869 p.440 (CCC first ref); Field 17/7/1869 p.53 & 6/5/1871 p.372

⁴⁴⁰ Chronicle 30/6/1868 p.6 & 28/12/1869 p.6; Cambridge Alumni 2013 (ACU)

⁴⁴¹ Todd 1979 p.80

⁴⁴² Lillie 1897 p.75/76; Field 2/7/1870 p.16 & 6/5/1871 p.372; Todd 1979 p.85 (AL in 1870 photo)

⁴⁴³ Lillie 1897 p.102-104. In 1871 Hale invited AL to stay with him in Chesham and they "played croquet every day for four or five days"; Hale's house was called Germaines and he gave this name to his lawn

grew to manhood in Cheltenham as a day boy at Cheltenham College and whose family home remained nearby in Gloucestershire after a move from Cheltenham near the end of 1868⁴⁴⁴. Peel was a young cousin of Walter Whitmore, the “father of modern croquet” and the first secretary of the All England Club in 1868⁴⁴⁵, and he became a member of the Cheltenham club in its first year when already one of the leading national players⁴⁴⁶. He went up to Trinity College, Cambridge in 1867 and his tournament years spanned his time there as an undergraduate and the early years after his graduation including legal training preparatory to being called to the bar in 1875⁴⁴⁷. He was All England open champion in 1868, 1870 and 1871, and won the All England club members’ competition in 1869⁴⁴⁸. Lillie for his part had won the All Comers at Wimbledon in 1871, before losing to Peel in the challenge round, and Peel, Lillie and Law were all prominent All England players⁴⁴⁹. For four years from 1871 to 1874, with minor exceptions, they played in the Cheltenham tournament and in 1872 they all served on the tournament management committee⁴⁵⁰. Lillie, however, was Cheltenham’s driving force in the first years of lawn tennis. He became Honorary Secretary after the 1873 Cheltenham tournament⁴⁵¹ and followed with interest the debate of lawn tennis rules that began in 1874, aligning himself with Hale rather than Wingfield. In 1875 he presided over the club’s first tennis tournament and he organised further tennis events in 1876⁴⁵². While Law, Peel and the first secretary Wilton Haines⁴⁵³ were all young men making their way in their chosen careers, Lillie was forty-three in 1874, unmarried and living off an army pension and probably substantial private means – he was a man in full control of his time and with plenty to spare⁴⁵⁴.

George Arthur Howard Lillie was more Londoner than Cheltonian. He was born in Fulham in 1831 and his family were based there until 1837 when they moved on to Kensington, and a few years later migrated to Chelsea⁴⁵⁵. His father, Sir John Scott Lillie CB, was a native of County Roscommon in Ireland⁴⁵⁶ and joined the British army as an infantry officer in his late teens. He served through the whole Peninsular War campaign from 1808 to 1814, winning decorations for bravery and surviving severe wounds, and he ended his career with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, Grenadier Guards⁴⁵⁷. Returned to Britain, where he was a landowner in both England and Ireland, he married in 1820 and in 1822 acquired a property in Fulham called The Hermitage, a small mansion set in some sixteen acres⁴⁵⁸. In the 1820’s and

tennis rules.

⁴⁴⁴ Looker-on 21/11/1868 p.745 “Departures”. CC Register 1910 p.255: WHP was there from 1862 to 1866; his brother William (p.268) was a day boy from 1863 to Dec. 1869 (father’s residence Cheltenham).

⁴⁴⁵ “The History of Croquet”, DMC Prichard, Cassell 1981, p.24 (“father”), 26, 31 & 34; Lillie 1897 p.45; Todd 1979 p.80 to 82.

⁴⁴⁶ Looker-on 10/7/1869 p.440, Kentish Gazette 25/8/1868 p.2 (WHP at Moreton-in-Marsh open).

⁴⁴⁷ CC Register 1910 p.255. He was called to the bar in 1875 and played in the All England championships of 1876 but not 1877 (Field 1/7/1876 p.17).

⁴⁴⁸ Prichard 1981 p.210 & 211, Field 17/7/1869 p.53

⁴⁴⁹ Prichard 1981 p.211 & Sheffield Telegraph, 8/7/1871 p.6 (Law won the handicap).

⁴⁵⁰ Looker-on 8/6/1872, p.356, Field 27/6/1874 p.650 (Lillie, Law, Peel) etc.

⁴⁵¹ Looker-on 13/6/1874 p.1 & 4/7/1874 p.435 (- “The meeting throughout was very successful and reflected much credit on Mr Lillie, who acted as Honorary Secretary to the meeting”).

⁴⁵² Looker-on 22/5/1875 p.1, 6/5/1876 p.297 & 3/6/1876 p.1

⁴⁵³ Looker-on 21/5/1870 p.1 & census 1871 for JP Wilton Haines of Boteler House. CC Register 1910 p.293, admitted solicitor 1874. Like Peel, Haines was a day boy at the college – he left a year after Peel.

⁴⁵⁴ AL census 1871 (ACU)

⁴⁵⁵ AL baptism record & census 1871 (ACU); “Fulham Old and New”, by CJ Ferret, Leadenhall 1900 p.273, Sir JSL electoral rolls 1839 (Kensington) & 1841 (Chelsea), Sir JSL census 1841 (Chelsea)

⁴⁵⁶ Fulham Old and New 1900 p.273

⁴⁵⁷ Obituaries Times 1/7/1868 p.12, Cork Constitution 8/7/1868 p.2 etc.

⁴⁵⁸ JSL marriage register 1820 (ACU). Fulham Old and New 1900 p.271-273; “The Lillie Enclave Fulham”, Lillie Road Residents Association 2018 p.3.

1830's he managed the development of his Fulham land holdings, laying out Lillie Road, Empress Place and Seagrave Road and building the North End brewery and the Lillie Arms pub⁴⁵⁹. Other London development projects attracted his patronage and beyond his involvement in business, he occupied himself as a local magistrate, Deputy Lieutenant for Middlesex⁴⁶⁰, and an inventor, developing amongst other things an early form of machine gun⁴⁶¹. Of six or so children born to him and his wife Louisa, three survived into the 1870's: John, born in 1821, Arthur born in 1831 and Louisa, born in 1834⁴⁶². Sir John himself died in 1868, eight years after his first wife Louisa⁴⁶³.

As a teenager Arthur was sent off to Addiscombe, the East India Company's military college in Croydon, to train for a career in the Indian Army⁴⁶⁴. He passed out in June 1847 when sixteen and arrived in India in January 1848 with the rank of ensign to join the 13th Bengal Native Infantry⁴⁶⁵. In 1851 he was promoted to Lieutenant and he saw action during the Santal campaign of 1855⁴⁶⁶. When the widespread rebellion of Indian soldiers erupted in 1857 his unit was based in Lucknow and the 13th proved to be the least mutinous of the local regiments. More than half its complement sided with the British and they played a major role in the defence of the residency during the months of the siege that followed; decades later, as an author, Arthur was to call them simply *The Faithful Regiment of Lucknow*⁴⁶⁷. Their loyalty was probably due to the popularity of their commanding officer, Major Charles Bruère, who had served with the regiment for over twenty years⁴⁶⁸. If Bruère won over his men through sensitivity to their beliefs and culture, he may also have influenced his junior officers for Lieutenant Lillie developed an interest in religion well beyond his Anglican Christianity. He pursued studies into Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism and over time assimilated Buddhism into the Christian beliefs of his upbringing⁴⁶⁹.

Although present in India for the principal period of the rebellion and its suppression, Lillie was absent from his unit when the siege of Lucknow began as he had been granted six months leave from the middle of April to visit Dacca and Calcutta⁴⁷⁰. The siege ran from May to

⁴⁵⁹ "The Lillie Enclave Fulham" 2018 p.3

⁴⁶⁰ London Metropolitan Archives, Middlesex JP's, discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk, 2021 (DL, JP, CB); Morning Herald 22/4/1841 p.6, Middlesex Sessions (JP), obituary Cork Constitution 8/7/1868 p.2 (DL).

⁴⁶¹ JSL was a shareholder in both the Hammersmith Bridge Co and the Kensington Canal Co ("Lillie Enclave" p.3). Inventor: the Lillie Rifle battery (Fulham Old and New p.273 & Broad Arrow 6/6/1874 p.710); propulsion by atmospheric pressure (Morning Herald 8/10/1864 p.8) etc.

⁴⁶² Baptism registers 1821, 1831 & 1834 (ACU); censuses.

⁴⁶³ Probates JSL 1869 & Dame Louisa 1860 (ACU). JSL remarried in 1862 – Elizabeth H Carew (ACU).

⁴⁶⁴ Home News for India 24/6/1847 p.356. Census 1841 shows AL as a pupil to the headmaster of Christ's Hospital School, Hertford aged 10. He is not included in the school register & appears to have been tutored privately by the headmaster (emails from CJ at the school archives 26/8/2014).

⁴⁶⁵ Allen's Indian Mail 22/7/1847 p.443 (Addiscombe), 6/3/1848 p.140 (arrival), 25/5/1848 p.300 (Ensign 13th NI). See also AL's obituary in Naval & Military Gazette 9/12/1911 p.1173.

⁴⁶⁶ Obituary N & M Gazette 9/12/1911 p.1173. In one of the books he published after his retirement in England he referred to his participation in the military action to suppress a rebellion by the Santals tribal group in Eastern India ("The Influence of Buddhism on Primitive Christianity", Swan Sonnenschein & Co. 1893, p.16/17). On campaign, he took a keen interest in Santal religious practices and in his book he drew parallels with the practices of the Jewish people ("The Theosophical Society", Jeffrey D. Lavoie, Brown Walker Press, 2012, p.250).

⁴⁶⁷ "The Indian Mutiny 1857", Saul David, Viking/Penguin 2002, p.170; "An Indian Wizard", Arthur Lillie, Simkin Marshall & Co, 1887 p.1.

⁴⁶⁸ Saul David 2002 p.171

⁴⁶⁹ JD Lavoie 2012 p.261: "...he maintained a Gnostic belief system which assimilated Christianity and Buddhism".

⁴⁷⁰ British Library, India Office Records IOR/L/MIL/10/65/554-3: 1857; G.O. 8/4/1857; his permission was to visit Dacca & Calcutta on Private Affairs (Homeward Mail 9/6/1857 p.412). See also his absence from Outram's list of surviving officers of the 13th NI dated 13 October 1857 (The Examiner 5/12/1857 p.777).

November, with reinforcements fighting their way through in September, and Lillie evidently missed the entire harrowing experience⁴⁷¹. While his brother officers were cut off and fighting for their lives in defence of non-combatant men, women and children, he was stranded on the sidelines. Nevertheless he did see some action as in the autumn of 1857 he was appointed interpreter to a British regiment - Her Majesty's 13th Light Infantry – who were newly landed in India⁴⁷². In March 1858 they were sent to relieve the besieged garrison of Azimghur, a town some sixty miles north of Benares, and their objective was achieved after a short but severe engagement⁴⁷³. That was to be his last employment in India for his health was failing and soon after he was sent home for long leave on medical certificate. Back on English soil by the end of August, he received several extensions of leave but was invalided into retirement at the end of 1860⁴⁷⁴.

Less than a year after his return he was well enough for a visit to Cheltenham with his parents and two surviving siblings, sister Louisa and brother John⁴⁷⁵. The occasion was John's marriage into a long established Cheltenham family by the name of Nutt⁴⁷⁶. The father of the bride – the late gallant Major Nutt – had served with the Bombay Engineers and both his adult sons were officers of the Indian Army⁴⁷⁷. John had worked as a civil servant in India since 1840, firstly as an employee of the East India Company now as servant of the Crown, and Cheltenham was playing a familiar role in providing a gathering place for servants of the Raj⁴⁷⁸. How John conducted his courtship is the usual colonial mystery but perhaps his chosen one – Cecilia - visited the sub-continent to meet up with her family, or there was a whirlwind romance late in 1858 after John's arrival home on leave⁴⁷⁹. There was no haste evident in the wedding arrangements, though – no skimping: ten carriages and greys with postilions in scarlet jackets to transport the company from the Nutt residence to Swindon Village church, eight bridesmaids in identical outfits to attend to Cecilia (white dresses with matching scarves, bonnets of silk and tulle prettily adorned with roses and lillies of the valley), young strewers to scatter flowers in the path of the newlyweds as they left the church, an elegant banquet to follow the ceremony, and then in the evening a festive celebration for family and friends back at the Nutt family home⁴⁸⁰. The Looker-on's *Arrivals* page was so crowded with traffic for the Nutt address that it omitted general hotel arrivals for the week and inserted a one-line apology blaming lack of space⁴⁸¹.

This sampling of Cheltenham society evidently went down well with Arthur, and he and his sister Louisa returned to stay with the Nutts in 1860⁴⁸². However, for the next few years he seems to have treated London as his base and the census of 1861 shows him resident in

His novella "An Indian Wizard" was centred on Lucknow and the siege.

⁴⁷¹ Timetable per Encyclopaedia Britannica online 10/3/2021 etc.

⁴⁷² Interpreter: Allen's Indian Mail 1/12/1857 p.828 "Bengal", Friend of India 8/7/1858 p.650 (misc p.2); see also IOR/L/MIL/10/65/554-3, 1857. 13th LI arrival: Homeward Mail 15/12/1857 p.911.

⁴⁷³ Homeward Mail 20/5/1858 p.566 & JD Lavoie 2012 p.249/250 (which quotes AL in *Buddhism in Christendom*, 1887, pp. 76, 305).

⁴⁷⁴ IOR/L/MIL/10/67/554-3: 1858, "Leave to Europe on S.C. for 16 months, old rules. G.O. 15 June '58. Commenced 20 June '58"; Homeward Mail 14/8/1858 p.875, 19/8/1858 p.891 & 17/6/1860 p.233; Home News 3/9/1859 p.1137; HEIC Service List 1861 p.465 (ACU); Army & Navy Gazette 9/12/1911 p.1173.

⁴⁷⁵ Looker-on 2/7/1859 p.661

⁴⁷⁶ Chronicle 5/7/1859 p.5

⁴⁷⁷ Chronicle 21/7/1853 p.3 (obituary Major N); son Justinian: JAN census 1861, Hart 1908; son Henry: CC Register 1910 p.172.

⁴⁷⁸ HEIC list of annuitants 1877 (ACU)

⁴⁷⁹ Home News for India 25/9/1858 p.1252

⁴⁸⁰ Looker-on 2/7/1859 p.659

⁴⁸¹ Looker-on 2/7/1859 p.661. The family home was 15 Lansdown Crescent.

⁴⁸² Looker-on 21/7/1860 p.474 & 28/7/1860 p.492. The Lillies, Mrs Nutt & family and Captain Nutt seem to have arrived at 15 Lansdown Crescent at the same time – the Lillies stayed en route to Scotland.

Bayswater at the house of a widowed aunt named Alicia Bunbury (improbable as Oscar Wilde may have made this sound)⁴⁸³. On leaving the military, writing became one of his principal activities and over the rest of his life he was to publish more than twenty books - works both of fiction and non-fiction, half on religion and the occult, a few on croquet. His first work appeared in 1868 but in the census for 1871 he described his occupation simply as retired lieutenant of the Indian Army and he did the same in all censuses thereafter⁴⁸⁴. He favoured amateur theatricals for a time and a performance at the Bijou Theatre in Bayswater for the benefit of the band fund of the 1st Middlesex Engineer Volunteers in the spring of 1865 attracted the attention of *The Era*. The play was *Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady* and Arthur's role was that of the Marquis de Santa Cruz. *The Era* savoured his interpretation, reporting that he created immense amusement among his friends "unintentionally" through a variety of eccentricities which included closing his eyes and uttering "an er or aw" when struggling to remember his lines and wearing his short cloak so low it was "like a housemaid's apron the wrong side of her comely form"; the embellishments he brought to the role combined to give an "intensely original portrait of a Spanish Grandee"⁴⁸⁵. Undeterred by this mockery he was soon treading the boards again and his next amateur role came in December 1865 at the Theatre Royal in Cheltenham in *The Boots at the Swan*, a farce. Here the local Chronicle seemed genuinely appreciative: "Capt Lillie must be complimented for the excellent manner in which he personated Captain Frank Friskly"⁴⁸⁶. John Lillie's brother-in-law Justinian Nutt also took a leading part in the play and it is reasonable to assume he engineered Arthur's participation⁴⁸⁷.

Arthur's second bow on the society pages of Cheltenham's journals came the January following when he was listed as a guest at Mrs Podmore's ball at the Assembly Rooms – one of the most elegant balls of the season - and in February 1866 his social standing was confirmed by his presence at the Cheltenham Club Ball, in fancy dress as Othello⁴⁸⁸. March saw him back on stage in a comedy with the Gentleman Amateurs of Cheltenham – this time at the Gloucester Theatre Royal⁴⁸⁹ - and we can conclude that late in 1865 he moved his principal residence from London to the Queen of Watering Places. January 1867 saw him clasped firmly to the bosom of Cheltenham society as honorary secretary of the organising committee of the Bachelors Ball, although his name was missing from young Miss Corrie's cast of Robin Hood's men for her *Spirits of the Flowers and Foresters Quadrille*, the Dance of the Evening with the ladies dressed as wild flowers and the men in Sherwood Forest garb with bouquets of wild flowers in their caps⁴⁹⁰. At this time his brother John was in the process of a major change of career - uprooting himself from India and preparing for the priesthood – and he and Cecilia were moving to Cheltenham⁴⁹¹. He resigned from the Indian Civil Service in

⁴⁸³ Census for AL 1861

⁴⁸⁴ "Out of the Meshes" was published anonymously by Tinsley Brothers, London, in 1868 (Chronicle 17/11/1868 p.4 – an Indian novel). His authorship was revealed when later works were published by Tinsley.

⁴⁸⁵ *Era* 28/5/1865 p.10

⁴⁸⁶ Chronicle 26/12/1865 p.5. AL's use of the title of Captain is a curiosity given that his official final rank in the Indian Army was Lieutenant – it may have been a rank in the militia. In *The Era* and Gloucester Journal (see below) he used his Christian name and in the Looker-on of 5/1/1867 p.8 he was referred to as "A. Lillie Esq" (likewise in *The Field* 5/6/1869 p.483). In 1871 a local sports outfitter called Baker advertised a croquet mallet introduced by "Capt. A Lillie" and favoured by members of Cheltenham CC (Looker-on 8/4/1871 p.223 etc).

⁴⁸⁷ Chronicle 19/12/1865 p.4 & Looker-on 23/12/1865 p.824

⁴⁸⁸ Looker-on 27/1/1866 p.57 & 10/2/1866 p.88 & 90

⁴⁸⁹ Gloucester Journal 17/3/1866 p.4, now described as "Mr Arthur Lillie, late Bengal Army".

⁴⁹⁰ Looker-on 5/1/1867 p.8 & 23/2/1867 p.121

⁴⁹¹ JESL was ordained in 1870 (Birmingham Daily Gazette 20/12/1870 p.6)

February 1867 and the family were installed at 15 Lansdown Crescent by the time of the birth of their third child that April⁴⁹².

Despite a flourishing social life, Arthur never married and neither did his sister Louisa, who made her home with him⁴⁹³.

Croquet is thought to have arrived in England from Ireland early in the 1850s. By the mid sixties it was well established amongst the gentry as a pleasant social game suitable for whiling away time at garden parties in mixed company⁴⁹⁴. In Cheltenham the game was popular and was played principally on the lawns of Montpellier Gardens in parallel with archery⁴⁹⁵. In July 1865 the *Looker-on* reported the gardens being “thronged with ladies exercising themselves in this new and fashionable amusement, which seems just now to have taken the place of Archery in the estimation of the fair sex”⁴⁹⁶. Interest in the game held up and by the spring of 1868 the *Looker-on* could still observe the gardens busy with “the most fashionable circles of Cheltenham Society” promenading or “amusing themselves with Croquet or Archery”⁴⁹⁷. This type of croquet though was what Arthur Lillie called Crinoline Croquet – social croquet played according to local practices with infinitely varied lawn arrangements, equipment and rules⁴⁹⁸. Clubs had begun to be formed from 1865, with Worthing and Bedford to the fore, but there was no recognised set of rules in existence and indeed no central authority to establish one – home rules were the only rules⁴⁹⁹. Then a gentleman of leisure by the name of Walter Whitmore took it upon himself to plug the gap and codify the rules for tournament croquet.

In an ancient hall in Moreton-in-Marsh, some seventeen miles north-east of Cheltenham, Whitmore devised the rules which would convert the “silly” game of crinoline croquet into “the most intellectual of outdoor pastimes” (in Lillie’s words)⁵⁰⁰. Working in cooperation with a committee of players appointed by *The Field* magazine, Whitmore was principal draftsman and guiding spirit of the Field Rules which were published in April 1866 under the heading “Croquet: Its Implements and Laws”⁵⁰¹. The rules were generally accepted and became the template for the official rules of croquet⁵⁰². Whitmore followed this with a series of articles in *The Field* on croquet tactics⁵⁰³ and then in August 1867 he organised what came to be regarded as the first national open tournament. “Open” is perhaps a generous term for what was in essence a small invitation tournament for friends and neighbours but the competition was the embryo of the All England Championships and merits its place in history. The body of competitors probably numbered less than ten and the names of only six are known, but prominent amongst them was Arthur Law, the man shortly to become curate of

⁴⁹² *Homeward Mail* 8/3/1867 p.193, *Looker-on* 16/3/1867 p.170 (arrives from Calcutta); *Examiner* 8/5/1867 p.8. By 1869 AL was living at 23 Lansdown Crescent (per probate for Sir John Scott Lillie 9/7/1869, ACU)

⁴⁹³ Censuses 1871 to 1911 & Arrivals etc in Chelt newspapers (eg. *Chronicle* 23/11/1875 p.2); Louisa was AL’s executor in 1911 (AL probate 1912, ACU).

⁴⁹⁴ “The History of Croquet”, D.M.C. Prichard, Cassell 1981, p.8 & 10 (p.10 quotes Arthur Law)

⁴⁹⁵ *Looker-on* 4/7/1863 p.432

⁴⁹⁶ *Looker-on* 18/7/1865 p. 464

⁴⁹⁷ *Looker-on* 23/5/1868 p.328

⁴⁹⁸ Lillie 1897 p.34 et seq, Prichard 1981 p.10 to 13. Inter alia: hoop widths varied, men might be required to hold their mallets single-handed, “cages” and “tunnels” might be used (Lillie p.34 & *Field* 7/4/1866 p.281).

⁴⁹⁹ Prichard 1981 p.12

⁵⁰⁰ Lillie 1897 p.45/46. The hall was Chastleton House, the old family home inherited and occupied by his elder brother (census for WW 1871 & see Prichard 1981 p.19); now owned by the National Trust.

⁵⁰¹ Prichard 1981 p.22, Lillie 1897 p.47, *Field* 7/4/1866 p.280 & 281 (“a committee composed of players selected by the editor of *The Field*”).

⁵⁰² Prichard 1981 p.22: these rules were accepted “in serious croquet, in place of many other rival codes, until superseded by the Conference Laws in 1870”. See also Lillie 1897 p.48 (top).

⁵⁰³ Prichard 1981 p.22

Leckhampton, Cheltenham⁵⁰⁴. Less than a year later a letter to *The Field* proposed the formation of an All England Croquet Club, which could have an authority in the sport similar to that of the MCC in cricket, and the train of events for the foundation of the great Wimbledon club was set in motion⁵⁰⁵. The writer of the letter was Dr Richard Prior of Taunton, Somerset and he was recognised as the founder of the club, although because of his remoteness from London he declined to be a member of the management committee⁵⁰⁶. Nearly thirty years later Lillie was to honour him with the dedication to his history of croquet.

Dr Prior's proposal was well received and supported by *The Field* magazine itself and on 23rd July 1868 the first meeting of the provisional committee of the All England Club took place in *The Field* offices with the magazine's editor, John Walsh, in the chair⁵⁰⁷. There were six members present and these included Arthur Law, John Hale and Walter Whitmore, who was elected secretary. The organisation of the club was agreed, a treasurer appointed as well as the secretary, and the search for grounds set in motion⁵⁰⁸. It took some time to find suitable premises but late in 1869 four acres of fields in Worple Road, Wimbledon were secured and they were to be home to the All England Club for more than fifty years⁵⁰⁹. In parallel with the formation of the club, Whitmore was organising and publicising the second open championship at Moreton-in-Marsh and this began on 31st July⁵¹⁰. Arthur Law by now was in place as curate of Leckhampton and he rode over for the occasion, winning through two rounds but losing in the semi-finals⁵¹¹. Cheltenham's Walter Peel, a second year student at Trinity, Cambridge, entered as well and in due course overcame all opposition to supplant Whitmore as Open Champion⁵¹².

Law had begun playing croquet aged eighteen when at a private tutor in Cambridgeshire and he saw the game progress from social novelty in 1861 to acceptable garden party diversion in 1866, "when people were actually asked to play croquet and 'crossed mallets and balls' were used as a monogram on the invitation"⁵¹³. He graduated from Cambridge in 1865, took up his first curacy in 1866⁵¹⁴, and arrived in Cheltenham as a Whitmore acolyte to begin Lillie's croquet education in 1868⁵¹⁵. Lillie's induction included a trip to Evesham to witness a match between Law and the 1868 losing Open finalist, a Mr Phipps⁵¹⁶. By the spring of 1869 Lillie was well trained and confident enough in his game to enter for summer tournaments in Oxford and London, most notably the All England Crystal Palace meeting which drew in "every player of any eminence" in the land except for Walter Whitmore, who was at odds with the club committee⁵¹⁷. Firstly, though, there was the matter of an "experimental" competition for Cheltenham.

It was decided to hold a tournament in May. There were by then a good number of social croquet players in Cheltenham but there appears to have been no croquet club as such

⁵⁰⁴ Prichard 1981 p.25 & 26. The tournament "was confined to a few friends and neighbours...".

⁵⁰⁵ *Field* 30/5/1868 p.423

⁵⁰⁶ *Field* 20/6/1868 p.484

⁵⁰⁷ Todd 1979 p.80

⁵⁰⁸ Prichard 1881 p.31

⁵⁰⁹ Prichard 1881 p.35 & 36. See also "Wimbledon 1869 – 1921, The Changing Face of Worple Road", Alan Little, Wimbledon LT Museum 2003, p.3 etc.

⁵¹⁰ *Field* 18/7/1868 p.1, *Oxford Jnl* 18/7/1868 p.1, Prichard 1981 p.26

⁵¹¹ *Chronicle* 30/6/1868 p.6 & Lillie 1897 p.51 & 53

⁵¹² See section above "Arthur Lillie, society matrons etc", 1st paragraph

⁵¹³ Prichard 1981 p.10/11

⁵¹⁴ Cambridge alumni 2013 (ACU)

⁵¹⁵ Lillie 1897 p.75/76 – "...the pupils of Mr Whitmore formed the Cheltenham Club..."; "From [Mr Law] I first learnt the game..."

⁵¹⁶ Lillie 1897 p.47

⁵¹⁷ *Looker-on* 10/7/1869 p.440 & *Oxford Jnl* 10/7/1869 p.5; *Field* 17/7/1869 p.53.

and the new Field Rules were probably more honoured in the breach than the observance⁵¹⁸. The tournament seems to have been designed to dip a Cheltenham toe in the water of the serious game, and although the principal organisers and administrators were male (Lillie and Law assisted by the two Croker brothers⁵¹⁹), the impetus for the event came from the ladies of the town. Matrons of fashionable society were the driving force and four nailed their colours to the mast as Lady-Patronesses in a Looker-on advertisement: the Hon. Mrs Christie, Mrs Griffiths, Lady Ramsay and Mrs Rose⁵²⁰. With such formidable support, a good attendance was guaranteed and the strong female influence was reflected in the entries. Of the players who gathered for the event at Cheltenham cricket ground on 1st June, twenty-nine were female and a mere eleven male⁵²¹, and there were possibly six times as many spectators as contestants. Friend and family attended and *The Cheltenham Mercury* estimated the daily attendance to this “gay and brilliant spectacle” at over two hundred and fifty⁵²². Amongst prominent citizens present there were to be found Ramsays, Maltbys and Porters, an admiral, half-a-dozen captains, a vicar or two and Mrs and Miss Peel (even though Walter was absent - presumably confined to quarters for his studies at Cambridge)⁵²³.

Play started in the morning and after a break for luncheon in the cricket pavilion, continued until suspended at six o'clock. The following day play was resumed and most of the matches were completed by late afternoon. A few games of the Ladies Consolation competition remained to be played and these were carried over to the afternoon of the third day for completion in Montpellier Gardens⁵²⁴. Amongst the pioneering ladies, Miss Clara Higgins is worthy of particular note as she was later to be a pillar of Cheltenham's tennis club, under her married name of Mrs W.A. Hill, and she achieved fame within the croquet fraternity in 1894 by organising an open croquet tournament in Maidstone which led to a national revival of the tournament game after more than a decade in coma (the Open Championship had lapsed in 1883)⁵²⁵. She won through to the semi-final only to lose to the eventual winner, Miss C. Griffiths⁵²⁶. A lack of seeding in the men's event saw Lillie go out in the first round to Arthur Law but he had the consolation of winning the plate. His conqueror meanwhile “handled his mallet in his accustomed skilful manner” and won the main prize with comparative ease (according to *The Field*)⁵²⁷. Fashionable society was entertained, the competitors were well pleased and local journals pronounced the event a “most successful affair”, notwithstanding their confessed lack of understanding of the mysteries of the advanced game⁵²⁸.

Cheltenham Croquet Club came into being soon afterwards. Modern history records that Law inspired Lillie to found the club⁵²⁹ while Lillie's own account hints at a measure of reluctance on his part – “I was induced in the year 1869 to send out circulars for a croquet

⁵¹⁸ Looker-on 22/5/1869 p.1. A local publisher combined advertising the tournament with offering for sale copies of the new Field Rules at 6 pence per copy (Looker-on 29/5/1869 p.349).

⁵¹⁹ Looker-on 5/6/1869, p.360 & 361. Crokers: Old Cheltonians John and Walter Henry Croker (CC Register 1910 p.137 & 181). WHC, a day boy, was in the cricket XI from 1862 to 1864 and went on to Trinity Oxford (BA 1868). A third brother, Edward (CC register p.137), also played in the tournament.

⁵²⁰ Looker-on 22/5/1869 p.1. The tournament was conducted under *The Field* Rules revised in May (Looker-on 29/5/1869 p.349 & *Field* 5/6/1869 p.483).

⁵²¹ *Field* 5/6/1869 p.483 & *Chronicle* 8/6/1869 p.2

⁵²² *Chelt Mercury* 5/6/1869 p.3

⁵²³ Looker-on 5/6/1869 p.360

⁵²⁴ Looker-on 5/6/1869, p.360 & 361

⁵²⁵ Prichard 1981 p.62/63, 208, 211; Lillie 1897 p.222 – 224. In 1897 Lillie wrote: “I well remember receiving her name as the earliest entry for our first croquet tournament there” (p.222).

⁵²⁶ Looker-on 5/6/1869 p.360

⁵²⁷ *Field* 5/6/1869 p.483, *Chronicle* 8/6/1869, p.2

⁵²⁸ *Chronicle* 8/6/1869 p.2, Looker-on 5/6/1869 p.361, *Mercury* 5/6/1869 p.3

⁵²⁹ Prichard 1981 p.26

club” – but there is agreement that he was the prime mover⁵³⁰. The Montpellier Gardens Committee were approached for dedicated grounds and they made over to the club a disused bowling green which provided two croquet pitches of excellent turf⁵³¹. Early in July the club was represented by players of both sexes in Oxford’s open tournament (Law, Lillie, Peel and Clara Higgins to the fore) and by September it was of sufficient standing to qualify for an invitation to a General Conference of Croquet Players convened by Walter Whitmore⁵³². Representatives of some ten clubs gathered together in London in October to discuss the revision of the laws of croquet and a committee of ten were appointed to carry out a detailed review; Arthur Law and Walter Peel were two of the ten⁵³³.

Although Lillie was the primary organiser of the first tournament and managed the formation of the club, by the time of the second tournament in 1870 the official Honorary Secretary of the club was young Wilton Haines, a resident of Leckhampton⁵³⁴. Like Peel, Haines was a former Cheltenham College day boy and he was just twenty years old and at the beginning of his training as a solicitor⁵³⁵. Lillie was busy with his writing. He published his first work of fiction in 1868 and followed with others in 1869, 1870 and 1872⁵³⁶ while diverting to sports instruction with a book on croquet in the spring of 1872⁵³⁷. Then he took a rest from publication until 1881 when he returned to educational writing with a book on Buddhism⁵³⁸. It was to be 1887 before he tried his hand at fiction again and then he built his novel around the siege of Lucknow⁵³⁹. His second and third books were written for children and attracted reasonable reviews: in 1869 the Illustrated London News highly commended “that merry little joke” *The Enchanted Toasting Fork*, and a year later it enjoyed the “whimsical drollery” of *The King of Topsy Turvy*, drawing a comparison for its “wild passion for fun and frolic at any price of improbability” with Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*⁵⁴⁰. At the time of putting the finishing touches to *Topsy Turvy* in 1870, Lillie had four nieces living in Cheltenham aged ten, nine, three and one, and “Uncle Arcle” dedicated his flight of nonsense to “Little Gacie, and Tiny and May”; we hope he was rewarded with youthful laughter at bedtime.

His first book in 1868 was a novel entitled *Out of the Meshes*. It was set in his India and included “large canvasses of glowing poetical Indian scenery” as well as detailed portrayals of army officers, regimental life, colonial society generally and, in passing, “the Anglo-Indian colony in the county of Gloucester” (Cheltenham thinly disguised?)⁵⁴¹. The Morning Post gave him nearly two full columns in review and declared his “romantic debut” to be clever, thoughtful and well constructed – “a novel of character with skilfully finished full lengths and many clever and original sketches[a] rare union of instructiveness concerning a mass of obscure points

⁵³⁰ Lillie 1897 p.76. There is a first reference to the club in Looker-on 10/7/1869 p.440.

⁵³¹ Lillie 1897 p.76

⁵³² Looker-on 10/7/1869 p.440 & Jackson’s Oxford Jnl 10/7/1869 p.5. Clara Higgins and Miss Peel appear to have been Cheltenham’s female ambassadors (Looker-on). Lillie beat Dr Prior in the first round.

⁵³³ Field 30/10/1869 p.370 & Prichard 1981 p.36 & 37

⁵³⁴ Looker-on 21/5/1870 p.1

⁵³⁵ CC Register 1910 p.293 and census 1871 for John PW Haines

⁵³⁶ 1868: *Out of the Meshes* (An Indian Novel in 3 volumes - Morning Post 10/10/1868 p.3). 1869: *The Enchanted Toasting Fork* (A New Fairy Tale Profusely Illustrated – Globe 19/6/1869 p.1). 1870: *The King of Topsy Turvy* (A Children’s Book – Looker-on 21/1/1871 p.44). 1872: *Puppets Dallying* (A Novel – Morning Post 30/8/1872 p.3). All 4 books published by Tinsley Brothers, London.

⁵³⁷ Field 13/4/1872 p.335

⁵³⁸ “Buddha and early Buddhism”, Trubner & Co London, 1881 (Edinburgh Daily Review 4/7/1881 p.6 – “with illustrations drawn by the author”).

⁵³⁹ “An Indian Wizard”, Simpkin Marshall & Co. London, 1887 (Morning Post 27/10/1887 p.8).

⁵⁴⁰ Illustrated London News 14/1/1871 p.34 & 11/12/1869 p.590, Looker-on 19/11/1870 p.740. Alice Liddell’s grandfather – Rev HG Liddell – became a resident of Cheltenham and Alice was living at his house in Charlton Kings at census time 1871.

⁵⁴¹ Morning Post 10/10/1868 p.3

Indian, with the constructive attractiveness of a natural, simple and interesting story". It was a first hand account of life in India and therein lay its attraction. *Puppets Dallying*, 1872, his second novel for adults, was set in Europe and received a firm thumbs down from the media. The Morning Post reduced him to half a column and judged the story a mess, apologising that if its sketch of the contents was imperfect and confused, that was the effect of the book; "in making his puppets dally, he makes the dalliance rather tiresome"⁵⁴². The London Daily News observed that it was a story no one could take seriously as it was marked by an absence of responsible human beings – "when the author openly proclaims his work as no better than a Punch and Judy show, his readers cannot be blamed if they accept the comparison he himself provides"; the News went on to complain about "the want of care and taste displayed in the style of [the] novel"⁵⁴³. The judgment of the Cheltenham Chronicle was short and scathing (Et tu, Brute?). Lillie's story was "ill conceived, disjointed and unfinished" and there was "not a single natural character throughout"; he would do better to remain "in the dominion of the King of Topsy Turvy" and "in the future not attempt works beyond his scope"⁵⁴⁴. The criticisms seem to have hit home and Lillie left the field wounded, confining himself to non-fiction for the next fifteen years.

His book on croquet was commissioned and published by John Jaques, one of the leading manufacturers of croquet sets⁵⁴⁵, and was guaranteed wide circulation as it was sold as part and parcel of Jaques sets in 1873 and 1874⁵⁴⁶. Its full title was "The Book of Croquet: its Tactics, Laws and Mode of Play" and it marked Lillie's arrival as a recognised authority on the game. Jaques first produced a code of laws to accompany his croquet sets in 1864 but by his own admission, the early instructions were brief and incomplete and issued merely out of commercial necessity – the aim was to sell croquet implements and for sets to be marketable they needed to include the rules of the game⁵⁴⁷.

Cheltenham's croquet tournament was repeated successfully in 1870. It was again held at the Hales Road cricket ground, presumably because the Montpellier lawns were still committed to subscribers, and the Looker-on took a dim view. In the opinion of the journal the cricket ground was rough and bumpy in comparison with the Oxford tournament's lawns, and, given the threatening aspect of the skies, too far from the fashionable quarters of the town to attract an audience beyond those with a particular interest in the game⁵⁴⁸. The ladies field was reduced to fourteen, but there were two Maltby entrants (Jane and Ellen)⁵⁴⁹ as well as one Porter (Laura, aged twenty five), and Clara Higgins reappeared only to lose in the first round⁵⁵⁰. Ellen Maltby – aged nineteen and an alumna of Cheltenham Ladies College – was to transfer her allegiance to tennis in later years and she competed in tournaments from 1877⁵⁵¹. Louisa Lillie may have shared a house with her brother but Arthur's enthusiasm for the serious game failed to infect her and once again she was absent from the ranks of ladies swinging mallets on the Hales Road pitch⁵⁵². The men's field at nine was slightly smaller than the eleven of 1869 and featured the familiar names of Law, Lillie and Croker, while the

⁵⁴² Morning Post 30/8/1872 p.3

⁵⁴³ London Daily News 26/12/1872 p.2

⁵⁴⁴ Chronicle 1/10/1872 p.5

⁵⁴⁵ Prichard 1981 p.6/7, 9 & 12.

⁵⁴⁶ Field 13/4/1872 p.335, Graphic 28/6/1873 p.621, Diss Express 12/6/1874 p.1 etc

⁵⁴⁷ Prichard 1981 p.9 & p.198 note 7; Lillie 1897 p.29/30 (letter from Jaques to Lillie 28/5/1879)

⁵⁴⁸ Looker-on 4/6/1870 p.360 & 361

⁵⁴⁹ Census 1871 for Edward Maltby (Jane – eldest sister)

⁵⁵⁰ Looker-on 4/6/1870 p.361; census 1871 for Laura Porter (family of RT Porter)

⁵⁵¹ Looker-on 1/12/1877 p.759 etc; email from Ladies College archivist 9/12/2013; census 1871.

⁵⁵² Louisa was 35 in 1869 and she never married. She rarely appeared on the social pages of Cheltenham's journals; only when Arthur was secretary to the Bachelors' Ball for a second time in 1868 did her name slip onto a dance guest list (as La Violette) (Looker-on 1/2/1868 p.71 & 22/2/1868 p.123).

Church's commitment was doubled to four Reverends⁵⁵³. Henry Porter took a first bow but succumbed in his first match, as did Whaley Nutt.

In 1871, the tournament was finally elevated to Montpellier Gardens and the garden company's Full Military Band was deployed to give a musical swing to proceedings. Subscribers to the gardens were welcomed as were any members of the public willing to invest a shilling in a day ticket⁵⁵⁴. Competitor numbers were much the same as 1870 but mixed doubles was added to the programme and Walter Peel and his sister triumphed in a field of seven couples. The social side of the tournament was much enhanced but the participation of Reverends collapsed to just one – Arthur Law, who carried off the singles title⁵⁵⁵. Clara Higgins was now Mrs Hill and succumbed in the first round of the singles to Miss Peel. The political world made an impact for the first time when Cheltenham's young MP chose to publicise his approval of the event with a chivalrous gesture. Liberal Henry Bernhardt Samuelson⁵⁵⁶ donated a gold locket as the prize for the Ladies Singles, to be held for one year and owned in perpetuity if the tenant won the following year as well⁵⁵⁷. The Cheltenham Chronicle thought this very droll, largely because the prize locket bore the device of Samuelson's monogram etched in enamel, and it devoted a full half column to the subject. What was the lucky girl to do with the trinket for her year of custody; wearing the locket was not a serious option so should she invest in a glass case and exhibit the trophy in her boudoir?⁵⁵⁸ The monogram deserved to be mocked but the idea of a locket was reasonable enough and when Samuelson lost his seat to Conservative James Agg-Gardner in 1874, the new MP himself donated a gold locket to the club as second prize for the Ladies Singles – ladies' croquet won cross-party support⁵⁵⁹.

Montpellier Gardens was pronounced a success, helping to attract a large and appreciative concourse of spectators⁵⁶⁰, and it was to continue to host the tournament for another five years until local interest in the event withered to extinction. Then lawn tennis came to its rescue and its sporting status was revived as Cheltenham's principal grass court facility, managed from early 1881 by James Lillywhite⁵⁶¹. The Gardens dated back to the early days of the Montpellier Spa and were originally laid out to provide an attractive setting for the pump room and a place for society to meet and promenade⁵⁶². By 1870 they were central to a substantial square of houses about five hundred yards south west of the town centre, next door to Suffolk Square and in easy walking distance of Cheltenham College. They extended to nearly nine acres and provided elegant pleasure grounds in an area of upmarket housing, "a place of recreation for the residents of the most fashionable quarters of the town"⁵⁶³. By contrast the All England Club's grounds in Wimbledon ran to just four acres, were half a mile west of Wimbledon station, and were sandwiched between Worple Road and the main line to Waterloo. In 1869 Worple Road was little more than a cart track and the club's adjoining premises were a brick field and a dairy farm whose fence needed repairs in the first months of

⁵⁵³ Looker-on 4/6/1870 p.361

⁵⁵⁴ Looker-on 27/5/1871 p.1

⁵⁵⁵ Looker-on 10/6/1871 p.361 & Field 17/6/1871 p.487

⁵⁵⁶ HBS obituary Gloucester Echo 15/3/1937 p.1

⁵⁵⁷ Chronicle 13/6/1871 p.4

⁵⁵⁸ Chronicle 13/6/1871 p.4: "The sweet modesty of a young man about town fancying that all the nice girls who frequent croquet lawns being in a passion of desire to possess and wear his monogram worked in enamel!"

⁵⁵⁹ Looker-on 27/6/1874 p.420 & Field 4/7/1874 p.13

⁵⁶⁰ Field 17/6/1871 p.487

⁵⁶¹ Chronicle 19/4/1881 p.8

⁵⁶² www.cheltenham.gov.uk 2014 "History of the gardens"

⁵⁶³ Looker-on 26/3/1881 p.200, Mercury 1/8/1863 p.1 (acreage) & Chronicle 17/9/1861 p.4

the All England lease to prevent the incursion of cattle and pigs onto the newly manicured turf⁵⁶⁴.



7.2 Montpellier Gardens, looking along the wide pathway that bisects the gardens towards the south-east side, December 2013



7.3 Montpellier Gardens looking towards the east corner, December 2013

⁵⁶⁴ Todd 1979 p.81 & 82 & Alan Little 2003 “The Changing Face of Worples Road” p.3

Privately owned, Montpellier Gardens had a wide variety of uses. Archery, bowling and croquet were available by subscription, bands performed daily in season to entertain promenaders, and the grounds could be hired for athletics events, floral shows, fetes and public entertainments (- in 1862 Blondin performed on his tightrope before an audience estimated at three and a half thousand⁵⁶⁵). The Cheltenham Montpellier Gardens Company had acquired the gardens in 1861 for £5,750 with the aim of laying out and maintaining the gardens “as a place for Public Amusement, Recreation and Resort”⁵⁶⁶. The directors, who were led by Sir Alexander Ramsay as chairman and included Dr John Abercrombie (future founding secretary of the Cheltenham open lawn tennis tournament), declared an intention to build a hall suitable for musical performances and other public entertainments and events, attended by “convenient ante-rooms”, a museum, conservatories, “Turkish and other baths” and even Tennis and Racket Courts⁵⁶⁷. The plans were worthy but they were complicated almost immediately by a proposal for the construction of a new railway line with a route through the gardens (supposedly underneath by tunnel)⁵⁶⁸, and although architectural drawings with cost estimates were obtained by the board at the end of 1863, the project seems to have lost its way in the process of design, consultation and financial appraisal, and was shelved⁵⁶⁹. As the years passed, fashions and sporting needs changed and eventually a leisure palace was built but in Imperial Square in the late 1870’s and without a Turkish bath⁵⁷⁰.

The years 1872 and 1873 saw the continuation of the tournament, but with numbers falling off slightly in 1873⁵⁷¹. In 1872 two future leading tennis players put in a first appearance – Miss Marian Bradley and Mr Myers (assuming this to be Arthur Myers⁵⁷²) – and they teamed up in the mixed pairs to win through two rounds, disposing of Henry & Edith Porter in the first⁵⁷³. Mrs Clara Hill progressed to contest the Ladies final but was denied the Samuelson locknet by Miss Jones⁵⁷⁴. The Scottish champion, Mr Macfie, competed for the first time but was knocked out in the second round by Arthur Lillie. In 1873 the Ladies Singles was reduced to nine entrants, including the defending champion, and the Gentlemen fell to a hard core of five – Lillie, Law, Henry Porter and the brothers Wilton and Robert Haines, as other croquet tournaments apparently took a toll⁵⁷⁵. (Mr Macfie was otherwise engaged in Kilmux, Fife, with his own private tournament which was played under the Conference rules and latest All England Club regulations. Unusually his singles competition was mixed, with three ladies participating in company with seven men - Macfie came out on top⁵⁷⁶. The Scottish Championship proper was held in Moffat that September and Lillie was on the management committee and won the All Comers⁵⁷⁷.)

⁵⁶⁵ Looker-on 21/6/1862 p.449, 17/5/1862 p.352, 23/12/1865 p.829, 23/5/1868 p.328 etc

⁵⁶⁶ Chronicle 17/9/1861, p.4. The directors comprised 11 members of the gentry (Esq or more) and some 8 tradesmen (Mr), with James Lillywhite absent.

⁵⁶⁷ Chronicle 17/9/1861 p.4. Sir AR chairman: Chronicle 16/12/1862 p.5 etc.

⁵⁶⁸ Looker-on 26/4/1862 p.305, Examiner 25/6/1862 p.8, Chronicle 31/5/1864 p. 6, Looker-on 11/6/1864 p.379 etc.

⁵⁶⁹ Chelt Mercury 1/8/1863 p.1 & Chelt Journal 26/12/1863 p.1

⁵⁷⁰ Chronicle 8/10/1878 p.4 & 12/11/1878 p.2 etc

⁵⁷¹ Ladies down from 10 to 9, Men 8 to 5, Mixed 9 pairs to 7 (5 men + 9 women) (Looker-on 22/6/1872 p.393 & 5/7/1873 p.425).

⁵⁷² Arthur was 21 in June 1872 (CC Register 1910 p.261) and had two older brothers: Frederick 29 was based in Cambridge, and Ernest 27 in Oxford (Susan Myers census 1871). Bradley and Myers played together in a mixed doubles tennis club event of January 1880 and won it (Looker-on 10/1/1880 p.24).

⁵⁷³ Looker-on 22/6/1872 p.393

⁵⁷⁴ Field 22/6/1872 p.572 & 29/6/1872 p.588

⁵⁷⁵ Looker-on 5/7/1873 p.425, Field 5/7/1873 p.15 & 12/7/1873 p.51

⁵⁷⁶ Field 12/7/1873 p.51 & Fife Herald 10/7/1873 p.3

⁵⁷⁷ Scotsman 23/8/1873 p.1 & Field 20/9/1873 p.314

The following year Arthur Lillie took over as honorary secretary from Wilton Haines⁵⁷⁸. Competitor numbers held up and Walter Peel reappeared only to lose to Lillie in the first round of the singles. Two strong outsiders entered the lists – the formidable Mrs Davidson of the All England club and Mr Brander (probably All Englander Gustavus Brander) - and the quality of the entry was as high as it ever had been⁵⁷⁹. The Looker-on assessed the attendance of spectators as being in excess of any previous year and judged this clear proof that in Cheltenham's fashionable circles croquet was holding its own against all other summer amusements with the sole exception of archery⁵⁸⁰. The Field's correspondent, however, was less sanguine and rounded off his tournament report by observing that thanks were due to Mr Lillie not just for his able management of the event but also "for having kept the club alive"⁵⁸¹. Standing in isolation from any other comment on the well-being of the club, this strikes a curious note and suggests the ear of The Field was closer to the ground. Lillie had felt the cold winds of change and he was not alone. In February Dr Richard Prior – the All England club's éminence grise - wrote to The Field bemoaning the decline he perceived in the popularity of croquet amongst women; the game had been brought "into discredit with the ladies" and when he asked why, the usual answer given was that the game had become "too scientific"⁵⁸². He could see this as grounds for a move away from participation in public tournaments but it was no reason for discarding the game "as a pastime in private grounds"; there must be other reasons and he invited suggestions from Field readers so that the game could be modified to meet women's wishes, a venture "highly desirable in the interests of society". His perception of croquet's fall from grace amongst women was to be proved correct but he was wrong in limiting his pessimism to one sex; enthusiasm for the game generally was waning.

1874 - Lawn tennis is launched, Lillywhite and Lillie join the party

In the first quarter of 1874, Walter Clopton Wingfield launched his new game of Sphairistike, or Lawn Tennis, and by March his chosen contractor - French & Co of London - was selling tennis sets at five guineas apiece⁵⁸³. Between July 1874 and June 1875 French sold more than a thousand sets⁵⁸⁴ and other sports outfitters joined the action as tennis exploded in popularity amongst the leisured classes. In a lengthy review of the new game and its progress in March 1875, The Morning Post described how the game infected London and then spread throughout the country:

"It made firm its hold upon every house in London where there was a lawn large enough for a court; it was adopted eagerly at Prince's; before the end of the summer it had penetrated to the utmost recesses of Northumberland and Suffolk, Carnarvonshire and Cornwall; and it is probable that before the present season has passed away it will have made its way across the Atlantic...."⁵⁸⁵

The gentry had found a new pastime and croquet was yesterday's game – society had moved on.

⁵⁷⁸ Looker-on 13/6/1874 p.1 & 21/6/1873 p.1

⁵⁷⁹ Looker-on 27/6/1874 p.420 & 4/7/1874 p.435. Ladies 9, Men 7, Mixed 5 pairs (5 men + 5 women). In 1874 two Cheltenham CC ladies in the form of Agnes & Blanche Haines entered the All England tournament to lend support (Field 18/7/1874 p.72).

⁵⁸⁰ Looker-on 27/6/1874 p.420

⁵⁸¹ Field 4/7/1874 p.13

⁵⁸² Field 7/2/1874 p.130 & Prichard 1981 p.52

⁵⁸³ Sporting Gazette 14/3/1874 p.239, Field 28/3/1874 p.318+3 (321)

⁵⁸⁴ "Wingfield, Edwardian Gentleman", by George Alexander, Peter E. Randall, 1986, p.94

⁵⁸⁵ Morning Post 27/3/1875 p.5 & 6

In Wimbledon the entry for the All England club's open tournament had sunk to six by 1874 and it was no better in 1875; the ladies championship of 1875 could hardly be called a tournament at all with just three entries⁵⁸⁶. The club's finances were moving from the shaky to the unsustainable and in July 1874 even the ground boy had to be sacked. Committee member Henry Jones suggested the introduction of Lawn Tennis and Badminton and in February 1875 the club decided to set aside a ground for the two racket games⁵⁸⁷. Croquet historian David M.C. Pritchard described this as the moment that the lawn tennis cuckoo laid its egg in the croquet nest and croquet players were to take a jaundiced view of subsequent events at the game's leading club, Henry Jones emerging as their *bête noire*⁵⁸⁸. At the end of the 1875 open tournament there appears to have been a small closed tennis tournament as The Field reported that "a scratch lawn tennis match" was won by Mr C.F. Dalton, and observed that "The lawn tennis has proved a success, a number of members having joined the club for the sake of playing that game"⁵⁸⁹. By the end of 1876 Lawn Tennis was well established in Worple Road and Badminton was said to have been ousted⁵⁹⁰. 1877 was the year of the first tennis championships and for the croquet fraternity this was the year the cuckoo's egg hatched⁵⁹¹. The tennis takeover had unstoppable momentum and in April 1877 the name of the club was changed to the All England Croquet and Lawn Tennis Club at the suggestion of John Hinde Hale, who had published his own rules for Lawn Tennis late in 1874⁵⁹².

In Cheltenham, James Lillywhite was as busy as ever when lawn tennis erupted. He had launched Indian Badminton in mid 1873 ("prettier, healthier and merrier than Croquet"⁵⁹³), was continuing with his various cricketing activities, and was heavily involved in the development of roller-skating. The profit margins on bought-in lawn tennis sets were unlikely to have been enticing but he was quick off the mark and by mid September 1874 was advertising Sphairistike tennis sets in The Cheltenham Looker-on. His first September advertisement was for the two new games of lawn tennis and Badminton together but tennis was given top billing and he altered his secondary name for Badminton from Lawn Racquets to Ladies Racquets, apparently to avoid confusion⁵⁹⁴. He offered for sale rackets and balls as well as full tennis sets. His advertising in the Looker-on for the rest of the year followed the same pattern and suggests that he was well aware of the greater appeal of lawn tennis to fashionable society. While the Looker-on described itself as "A notebook of the sayings and doings of social, political and fashionable life" – targeted one would think mainly at the gentry – the Chronicle was broader based and this may explain why his advertising for its clientele was the opposite way round: Badminton was given top billing in heavy print, with Lawn Racquets unchanged as the secondary name, and lawn tennis was lumped in with four other leading brands such as Muir's Arrows and Cavendish Croquet & Mallets⁵⁹⁵. Higher margins called for a higher profile.

Arthur Lillie had produced no further literary works since *Puppets Dallying* in the summer of 1872 but he had channelled some of his creativity into a pamphlet entitled *The Railway Fortress* and this was published by W. Mitchell in 1874. To those familiar with his

⁵⁸⁶ Field 18/7/1874 p.72 & 3/7/1875 p.15

⁵⁸⁷ Todd 1979 p.87/8

⁵⁸⁸ Prichard 1981 p.52/3 & p.57/58. On HJ: "Walsh and Henry Jones saw that there was no money now or ever in croquet and turned their attention entirely to lawn tennis.....Both became violently anti-croquet.....Jones was to turn Judas."

⁵⁸⁹ Field 10/7/1875 p.31

⁵⁹⁰ Todd 1979 p.88

⁵⁹¹ Prichard 1981 p.54

⁵⁹² Todd 1979 p.88 (name) & p.66-68 (Germaines rules)

⁵⁹³ Looker-on 7/6/1873 p.355

⁵⁹⁴ Looker-on 12/9/1874 p.601

⁵⁹⁵ Looker-on 12/9/1874 p.1 & Chronicle 29/9/1874 p.1

earlier volumes the title might have suggested some new flight of fancy but it was in fact an essay on the military defence of England and as such flew safely under the radar of Cheltenham's journals, thus sparing the author the slings and arrows of the Chronicle's scepticism. The Naval and Military Gazette was generous in the space it devoted to a review but gave his work a firm thumbs down⁵⁹⁶:

“Mr Lillie...has, he believes, discovered the great secret of fortification. According to him, the German, French and our own engineers are all wrong and that the true method of defence is what he calls ‘The Railway Fortress’.”

The present system of fortification should be replaced by railways, which would provide cover and permit the rapid concentration of forces as the situation required. Lillie provided a detailed illustration built around the landing on the Humber of a hostile force of three corps which then marched on London (and sought “to suddenly pierce the railway line on a front of nine miles somewhere about Dunmow”). The Gazette picked through his model step by step and dismissed his proposals as totally impractical. Military strategy was hardly his area of competence. He was unquestionably a man of ideas, with a gift for language, but at this time he was apparently a man searching for an outlet for his talents. It was said of his croquet that he was a great experimenter, even designing his own mallets, and at every tournament “he appeared with something strange and new”⁵⁹⁷. Lawn tennis was his next experiment.

As a prominent member of the All England club Lillie would have been close to developments in Wimbledon and he would have been painfully aware of the drift away from his favoured game in Cheltenham. At home there would have been keen interest in the latest of fashionable outdoor pastimes and society ladies were quick to adopt the game; in early November 1874 The Cheltenham Examiner could refer to the summer months when “Badminton and Lawn Tennis were all the rage at garden parties”⁵⁹⁸. The Cheltenham Croquet Club added the game to its amusements that winter according to The Field⁵⁹⁹. In Brighton, as early as September 1874 it was reported that the County Croquet Club had declared an intention to introduce lawn tennis at their Pavilion ground the following year, and it is evident that they and their Cheltenham colleagues had been trying their hands at the Germains version of lawn tennis devised by John Hale⁶⁰⁰ (who had played cricket for Sussex for several years, been in business as a brewer in Brighton and a resident of the Brighton area⁶⁰¹). Cheltenham's sports aficionados would have been familiar with the development of the game in its first year as there had been a lively correspondence on the subject in the sporting press from the second quarter of 1874.

Wingfield's rules were generally considered to be incomplete and inadequate and virtually every aspect of the game and its equipment came under discussion⁶⁰². Versions of lawn tennis that predated Wingfield's “invention” were described and propounded, most

⁵⁹⁶ Naval & Military Gazette 25/7/1874 p.468. See also Edinburgh Evening News 8/8/1874 p.3.

⁵⁹⁷ Prichard 1981 p.50

⁵⁹⁸ Examiner 11/11/1874 p.3

⁵⁹⁹ Field 12/6/1875 p.585

⁶⁰⁰ Brighton Gazette 26/9/1874 p.5 & 22/4/1875 p.5 (which reported the introduction of Germains LT – 3 or 4 LT sets to be in use). AL referred to the virtues of Germains LT in his letter to The Field of 28/11/1874 p.590. See also Todd 1979 p.66-68. For rules of Germains see Alexander 1986 p.269 & 270 (shows JHH's letter to Field dated 24/10/1874).

⁶⁰¹ Rugby school register 1842 - 1874 for JHH (entered 1843), censuses for JHH 1861 & 1871 (birth of children 1862 to 1865), Brighton Gazette 22/6/1865 p.5 etc (cricket). He was a temporary member of Worthing Croquet Club in 1866 (Lillie 1897 p.92).

⁶⁰² Morning Post 27/3/1875 p.5: “The rules published by Major Wingfield were manifestly untenable and were ignored from the first – with this result, that every locality adopted a separate code....”

notably the Leamington Spa Club game, and his claim to have “invented” lawn tennis raised hackles and was widely disputed⁶⁰³. Two members of the All England Club in particular involved themselves in the debate - John Hale and Henry Jones – and they were both friends and croquet associates of Lillie⁶⁰⁴. Hale, according to Lillie, was a fine tennis player, and he reports in his 1897 history of croquet that Hale “told me that he proposed lawn tennis in The Field the same week that it was started by Major Wingfield”⁶⁰⁵. In October 1874 Hale publicised his rules for Germains Lawn Tennis, advocating amongst other things the use of a rectangular court in preference to Wingfield’s hour-glass shape⁶⁰⁶. The Field was his launch-pad and he later announced that his rules would be registered in November and John Wisden & Co. would sell Germains rules and implements as his agent⁶⁰⁷. Jones made a detailed response in November supporting his proposal and suggesting some modifications⁶⁰⁸. A week later The Field carried a letter from Arthur Lillie giving general support to the Hale/Jones proposals, but coming down on Hale’s side for the treatment of net cords and on Jones’ side for the approach to “the pitching and bounding of the ball”. He offered the view that women particularly favoured Hale’s game:

“I am sure all who have tried “Germains” lawn tennis will agree with “Cavendish” [(Jones)] that ‘it bears away the palm from all similar games’. Men seem to prefer it and ladies likewise. The latter say that the modern dress renders it quite impossible to rush backwards, as is necessary in some of the cruder forms of lawn tennis, and that in the Germains game they find it far more easy to return the ball.”⁶⁰⁹

Lillie had been testing the water in Cheltenham and the ladies had stated a clear preference, perhaps because of an additional restriction on the flight of the ball in Hale’s game. Hale “confined the first and second pitches of the ball, in return as well as service, within the boundaries marked out”; Wingfield only required the first “pitch” to be within the boundaries⁶¹⁰. This seems to mean that for Hale the second bounce as well as the first had to be in-court and this would have had the effect of shortening and narrowing the court. Varied use of the terms “pitch” and “bound” by commentators of the day makes for confusing reading and in 1875 The Field muddied the waters still further by using the word “dap” – as in “a double-dap in the court in return as well as in the service”⁶¹¹. The rule of the second bounce fortunately soon died a death, probably overcome by difficulties of language if nothing else.

1875 – The croquet club holds a tennis tournament

The upshot of interest in the new game, and the presence of Arthur Lillie as informed protagonist, was that Cheltenham Croquet Club decided to hold a combined croquet and lawn tennis tournament in 1875, the tennis to follow the croquet and to be played under Germains rules. A practical virtue of Hale’s rules was that the centre net was the same width as Wingfield’s so it was possible to use Sphairistike equipment (available from Lillywhite’s) to play

⁶⁰³ Alexander 1986 Appendix D, p.280/1 (Field correspondence 5/12/1874 p.605), Badminton Library p.130 - 133 etc.

⁶⁰⁴ Alexander 1986 p.269 et seq. Friends: Lillie 1897 p.103 (Hale) & p.151 (Jones [Cavendish]).

⁶⁰⁵ Lillie 1897 p.104

⁶⁰⁶ Field 24/10/1874 p.435 (letter from JHH)

⁶⁰⁷ Field 14/11/1874 p.534. Also Wisden advertisement in Field 5/6/1875 p.577.

⁶⁰⁸ Alexander 1986 Appendix D, p.271-273 (letter to Field dated 21/11/1874)

⁶⁰⁹ Field 28/11/1874 p.590 (letter from AL). “Pitching” seems to be the landing of the ball.

⁶¹⁰ Field 6/3/1875 p.232 (Alexander 1986 p.287)

⁶¹¹ Field 12/6/1875 p.585

Germain's tennis⁶¹². The tournament was advertised in the *Looker-on* to commence on 31st May in Montpellier Gardens and labelled *The Croquet and Lawn Tennis Tournament* under the hand of Arthur Lillie, honorary secretary⁶¹³. The tennis event was in a broad sense an "open" tournament as its entrants included both non-members of the croquet club and a lady, an intrepid croquet player named Miss Brander who had won the croquet mixed doubles competition playing with the Rev Gustavus Brander, and was presumably his sister Anna⁶¹⁴. It is a curiosity that while the Reverend had played Rackets with some success during his time at Balliol College, Oxford, it was his sister who tried her hand in the new racket-and-ball competition⁶¹⁵. The *Looker-on* showed no sense of the history of the occasion and provided the baldest of accounts, probably as confused by the spectacle as most of the audience⁶¹⁶, but *The Field* stepped up to the plate and its report is likely to have been its first account of a lawn tennis tournament anywhere in Britain⁶¹⁷.

Although the tournament organisers advertised the application of Germain's Lawn Tennis rules, it seems possible these were discarded at the last minute and replaced by the revised rules signed off by the MCC tennis committee on 24th May, a week before the croquet tournament was due to start⁶¹⁸. In the second sentence of its tournament report *The Field* states: "The rules in the first instance were those of the Germain's' game, invented by Mr Hale", but it begins its second paragraph: "On the promulgation of the rules of the Marylebone Club, it was felt, however, that all other codes of law should give way to them, and it must be added that on trial they seemed to give great satisfaction". It may be wrong to link the two statements – the second might have applied to the world at large - but the most likely interpretation is that Lillie executed a sharp U-turn and Germain's and its double-dap were discarded in deference to the authority of the MCC (following its open process of consultation with Wingfield and Hale).

There were eight tennis players, three with military rank (one general, one colonel, one captain), and the only familiar names were Lillie, Henry Porter and Captain Hill, the husband of Clara Hill. Porter, a former rackets champion of Cheltenham College who had played the game through his years at Oxford University⁶¹⁹, predictably carved his way through the field to take the title, defeating Lillie in the first round, the general in the second, and a Mr Bird in the final. Bird, probably a teenager from a Leckhampton Indian Civil Service family, put up a good fight and led Porter by two games to none before exhausting himself in struggling to fourteen all in the third⁶²⁰. Captain Hill suffered the indignity of losing to Miss Brander in the first round

⁶¹² Todd 1979 p.67 (seven yards)

⁶¹³ *Looker-on* 22/5/1875 p.1

⁶¹⁴ *Looker-on* 5/6/1875 p.360 & 361. Censuses 1861 & 1871 for Anna E Brander etc. She was GB's only surviving sister in 1875, aged 27 (ACU). She and Carter (at least) were non-members of CCC.

⁶¹⁵ Balliol College Register – "second in university rackets 1860" etc. GB, aged 36 in 1875, was an Old Etonian (Eton Register 1905 p.28) but one of his brothers was a boarder at Cheltenham College from 1857 to 1862 (CC Register 1910 p.198).

⁶¹⁶ *Looker-on* 5/6/1875 p.361

⁶¹⁷ *The Field* 12/6/1875 p.585. No earlier report has been traced.

⁶¹⁸ *Field* 29/5/1875 p.531. The *Looker-on* of 29/5/1875 (p.1) was still advertising the use of Germain's rules. In March the MCC held a meeting to discuss the rules and both Hale & Wingfield attended to present their competing views (*Field* 6/3/1875 p.232).

⁶¹⁹ CC Register 1910 p.286. *The Field* 12/6/1875 (p.585) described him as "champion racquet player of his college at Oxford a year or two ago".

⁶²⁰ *The Field* 12/6/1875 p.585. Bird may well have been a young member of the long-established Bird family of Little Hatherley, Leckhampton, Cheltenham (census for Harry Bird 1871 etc). One son, Edward aged 19, had left Clifton College in 1874 and was on his way to Balliol, Oxford; another, Harry 17, was still a Clifton pupil and was to remain there until 1876. Edward was a scholar at Clifton while Harry was the more sporty of the two – Shooting VIII and Gym VIII – but it was still term time (Clifton register entries for E & H). Father Charles James Bird was Madras Civil Service (CJB probate 1879).

(“easily” in the pitiless language of the Looker-on⁶²¹) and it would have been small comfort for him that The Field judged that her “play for a lady was exceptionally good”. Miss Brander ran up against Bird in the second round and his “fine play” restored the natural order. Of these pioneers only Porter is known to have played in any subsequent outside tennis tournaments: he played his first major open at Cheltenham in 1879 and then competed regularly in regional tournaments until 1886, venturing to Wimbledon just in 1881⁶²². The Cheltenham Examiner declared that the club’s annual tournament had been “productive of a good deal of interest”, the addition to it of lawn tennis had proved popular, and for spectators “Lawn Tennis gives greater amusement than its more firmly established rival, requiring as it does greater activity, if not more skill, than the languidly played croquet”⁶²³. That was the closest the press came to offering a verdict on the novel event.

The croquet tournament seems to have been well enough supported. There were three outsiders amongst the ladies singles entry of eight and two outsiders in the men’s competition, but the men’s entry of six was notable for the absence of both Peel and Law while boosted by the presence of two Porters, as Henry’s younger brother Tindal made a first appearance⁶²⁴. Captain Hodgson – presumably the Cheltenham College gymnastics instructor⁶²⁵ – made a fleeting appearance in the first round, as in 1874, losing to Gustavus Brander. Law looked in on the first day but was unable to play as his one of his brothers was making a brief visit from overseas⁶²⁶. The Looker-on reported with regret that the “local talent” was completely eliminated in the first round of the doubles competition but the final, fought out between four outsiders, was redeemed by the excitement of the play which lasted all afternoon; “the brilliant play in the concluding game of all the croqueists was repeatedly applauded by the company present”. All England players won the men’s singles as well as the mixed doubles but lost out in the challenge round of the women’s singles when Blanche Haines knocked Wimbledon’s Mrs Davidson off her perch to claim the prize locket⁶²⁷.



⁶²¹ Looker-on 5/6/1875 p.361

⁶²² See Chapter 6 “C.F. Parr, Porters, Mardall etc” above

⁶²³ Chelt Examiner 9/6/1875 p.8

⁶²⁴ Looker-on 5/6/1875 p.360 & 361, & 12/6/1875 p.377. Tindal was just nineteen and recently crowned College gymnastics champion (CC Register 1910 p.348).

⁶²⁵ CC Register 1910 p.40. Captain George Egerton Hodgson joined the CC staff in 1871.

⁶²⁶ Field 5/6/1875 p.559

⁶²⁷ Looker-on 5/6/1875 p.360/361 & 12/6/1875 p.377, Field 12/6/1875 p.585