



*The History*  
*of the*  
DYVOURS  
LAWN TENNIS  
CLUB

1883 . . . . . 1933

(Successor to the EDINBURGH LAWN  
TENNIS CO., LTD. Founded 1875)

Introduction by  
KENNEDY SMELLIE, Esq., C.A.

*Honorary Secretary and Treasurer  
The Scottish Lawn Tennis Association*

LAWN TENNIS is the greatest of all games, and although this may not be admitted by all, that it is the most international of all games cannot be disputed. No other game can at present boast of an International Competition such as the Davis Cup, which is competed for annually by no less than thirty-three Nations.

In my opinion this position has been reached, not by the coming and the going of individual players, but by the great Lawn Tennis structure which has been created by the forming and carrying on of Lawn Tennis Clubs throughout the world.

The Scottish Lawn Tennis Association, of which I am at present Honorary Secretary and Treasurer, consists of affiliated Lawn Tennis Clubs, and in all its activities the claims of Clubs receive prior consideration to the claims of individual players.

In Scotland the Inter-Club Challenge Cup Competition takes precedence over all other Competitions and Tournaments, and on many occasions, when the necessity has arisen, a man has willingly withdrawn from a Championship Tournament in order to play for his Club in the Competition.

It is therefore with great interest that I have read the little histories of the various Clubs issued by Messrs R. W. Forsyth, Ltd., and I am certain they will prove most interesting to many of the older generation. They will also convey to the younger generation a more intimate knowledge of the history and tradition of each Club, and will thus intensify the "Club spirit" which is so essential to the life of the game and which is the only spirit in which the game is worth playing.

16 Rutland Square,  
Edinburgh, 12/4/33.

## foreword

*We trust that the members and past members of the various Edinburgh Lawn Tennis Clubs will find the brief summary of their club's history of interest.*

*Club records are in many cases incomplete, and with the passing of time since the formation of most of our leading clubs, this series is an endeavour to get together a record before it is too late and much interesting material thereby lost. With many records non-existent or not available, and many facts offered from memory by many of the people who so willingly assisted in the task, indulgence is asked for any little slips there may be in the records.*

*We most gratefully acknowledge the great help so kindly given by G. H. P. ALEXANDER in writing the histories, and by the following ladies and gentlemen in offering information to assist Mr Alexander:—*

Hon. LORD MACKAY	DAVID CALDER
A. WALLACE MACGREGOR, W.S.	A. W. BANKS
W. G. MANSON, W.S.	T. G. HERRIOT, C.A.
KENNEDY SMELLIE, C.A.	Prof. R. F. C. LEITH
R. W. COCKBURN, W.S.	A. F. CURRIE
Sheriff J. W. FORBES	T. HUNTER
Capt. W. DUCKWORTH BAYNE	ROBIN WELSH
J. W. ALLAN	Mrs ROBIN WELSH
A. F. SOMMERVILLE	Mrs HUDLESTON
A. G. CAIRNS, W.S.	

*We also express deep appreciation of the great help given by the present Club Secretaries and the kindly interest they have displayed.*

R. W. FORSYTH, LTD.

30 Princes Street,  
Edinburgh, 7/4/33.



THE club was founded in the winter of 1883-84, and consisted of the following:— Lord Dunedin, William Horn, J. G. Horn, the Honourable R. Lyon, Dr George Kerr, Sheriff C. R. A. Howden, Dr Peter M'Bride, Sheriff Mark Davidson, and the late Sheriff Patrick Smith.

In 1884-85 Mr Howden suggested that the name of the club should be "The Dyvours," as that was the old Scots legal name for "debtors" or "bankrupts," and the members had no ground of their own. The club colours were brown and yellow, these being the colours of the distinctive costume of the Dyvours who inhabited the Sanctuary of Holyrood.

The club first played on the two covered courts of the Edinburgh Lawn Tennis Company at the east side of the Grange Cricket Ground. When the Dyvour Summer Lawn Tennis Club started outside courts behind the original Grange Pavilion, many of those who had been playing at the Edinburgh Tennis Company's courts became members, so that the Dyvours Club is the direct successor of the Edinburgh Lawn Tennis Company. This takes us right back to the beginning of the game in Scotland, about which, fortunately, records are obtainable

from articles written by Lord Dunedin and Sir James Patten MacDougall for a book, "Aspects of Scottish Lawn Tennis," produced by the Westhall Club in 1910. Lord Dunedin wrote: "As regards the origin of the game, it was obviously suggested by real tennis, and so far as I know its real inventor was Major Wingfield. I first played it at a country house in England in 1874, but whether it was invented in the end of 1872 or in 1873 I am uncertain. Except for a trial game in the autumn of 1874, it was not played in Edinburgh till 1875, in the summer of which year we played it on the Grange Cricket Ground."

#### EARLY DAYS

Sir James Patten MacDougall, who as James Patten won the first Scottish Championship in 1878, wrote: "I recollect very well the month of October 1874 . . . there was no (real) tennis court in Edinburgh . . . I got down from England a box containing a game, which was named 'Sphairistike,' and induced several friends from the Parliament House to join me at the Grange Cricket Ground in Raeburn Place on a Saturday afternoon to see what it was like. Among those friends were Mr H. H. Lancaster, who had played tennis at Oxford in

the old Merton Street courts, the late Sheriff Henderson, and Sir Walter Simpson. It was felt that the game was one suitable for indoor exercise when outdoor sports were impossible, and I remember shortly afterwards that some of us used to leave Parliament House early in the afternoon and betake ourselves to the Grindlay Street Drill Hall. . . . Many a pleasant afternoon we had there, as I am quite sure Lord Dunedin, now Lord Justice General, Mr Maconochie, K.C., now Sheriff of the Lothians, Mr W. J. Mure, C.B., Mr Wharton Tod (now Mr Wharton Duff of Orton), and others will testify. But the courts at Grindlay Street were shortly to develop into the extensive building opened in 1878 at Raeburn Place adjoining the Grange Cricket Club Ground, in the two courts of which lawn tennis was practised and played for twenty years. A company was formed, the credit for initiating and managing which was due to the late Mr Gillon Fergusson, of The Isle. Shares were eagerly sought after, and during the late 'seventies and the early 'eighties there was no more fashionable resort. . . . At nine in the morning the present Lord Justice Clerk (Lord Kingsburgh) and other well-known members of the Bar were frequently to be found taking exercise on

the courts. . . . The company was a very prosperous concern."

### PROMINENT MEMBERS

Other leading members of this club in its early years were Lord Eglinton, L. M. Balfour-Melville, Sir Ludovic Grant, and J. A. H. Peile. Later in his article Sir James Patten MacDougall refers to the formation of the Dyvour Summer Lawn Tennis Club, as it was originally called. He wrote: "Even the Raeburn Place courts, excellent as they were, gave place during the summer months, early in the 'eighties, to the formation, on ground immediately adjoining them on the Grange Cricket Ground, of an outdoor club—The Dyvours—which ultimately led to the break-up of the old company and the removal of the building."

The building was let later to Mr Richardson in George Street for lessons in cycling, which was then the craze, and the dressing-rooms were used by the Dyvours. The building was taken down about 1902.

The game as played in the covered courts was considerably different from the game of the present day. It was more like real tennis or racquets, and it was part of the game to play the ball after it had hit the wall. Again,

there was no standing up to the net, no overhead service, no top spin. Success depended on accurate placing and hard hitting rather than killing a ball at the beginning of a rally. Sir James Patten MacDougall mentions there were two classes—those who, like himself, modelled their style of hitting on the game of tennis, and those whose strokes told of practice on the racquet court. Others again played a game based on both. This mixture of styles, together with the long rallies, made the game very exciting both to watch and to play.

#### SCOTLAND'S FIRST CHAMPION

Sir James Patten MacDougall won the first championship in 1878, and was again champion in 1880. L. M. Balfour-Melville was champion in 1879. Lord Dunedin and Sheriff C. C. Maconochie won the Doubles Championship all the three years—1878, 1879, and 1880. In 1881 J. G. Horn, then President of the Oxford University L.T.C., was the champion, and repeated his success in 1882 and 1883. Along with his brother, W. Horn, he also won the Doubles in 1881. In the Doubles of that year Lord Dunedin and Sheriff Maconochie, Ninian J. Finlay and William C. Johnston, Sir J. Patten

MacDougall and J. Wharton Duff, Professor John Rankine and James Rankine took part.

The championships were held on the Edinburgh Tennis Co.'s covered court from 1878 to 1883, and at the Dyvours courts from 1887 to 1893. During this time the Hon. P. Bowes-Lyon was champion in the three years 1885, 1886, and 1888, while he and his brother, the Hon. H. Bowes-Lyon, won the Doubles in the four years 1884, 1886, 1887, and 1888. The Hon. H. Bowes-Lyon also won the Whitehouse Cup from 1885 to 1888.

At one time there were eight grass courts, but this number was reduced to six when the Grange Pavilion was built. The club has always had grass courts, though there was a proposal at one time to have two hard courts.

The Dyvours, along with Whitehouse (founded by R. M. Watson in 1881), the University (1886), and Liberton (1883), were the chief supporters of the Scottish Championships until the formation of the S.L.T.A. in 1895. The club also had some very close matches with Whitehouse, and members took part in a tournament at the first Edinburgh Exhibition in the Meadows in 1886.

In 1893 the Grange Cricket Club extended the pavilion and reduced the space available

for tennis courts, and this was the cause of the championships being removed to St Andrews, where for a few years an open tournament for the East of Scotland Championship had been held, with R. M. Watson as referee. This title lapsed until a year or two after the formation of the East of Scotland Lawn Tennis Association, when the open tournament run by the Liberton Club was called the East of Scotland Championships. Two years ago this tournament was given by the Liberton committee to the E.S.L.T.A.

The present President of the Dyvours Club is Mr Malcolm Stuart, and the Hon. Secretary is Mr A. G. Cairns, W.S.

Throughout the years from that wonderful period at the beginning of its history the club, although little known, has maintained a leading place as one of the outstanding nurseries of the game in Scotland.