

David Hollingdale

David's recollections of the club, it's members and staff, and idiosyncrasies

I joined the Club in 1959 aged 23 when the subscription was 9 Guineas. The Club was very different in those days when it was regarded as an exclusive, upper-class club. Jacket, collar and ties at all times were the obligatory dress code, later relaxed to after 7.00pm, later still, abolished completely. Obtaining membership was not that easy, proposers and seconders were very careful over whom they were prepared to sponsor. The bar was a tiny room at the south end of the present bar. There was a passageway to the little bar which had no fire exits so, in the event of



fire, it would have been a death trap. The fruit machine sat where the coffee service is, and the barmaid was the famous Betty Dixon, a lovely little Glaswegian lady who addressed us all as "Mr". The 1965 photo on the left shows a group at my wedding - Betty Acland (mentioned later), Syd Callaway, Betty Dixon and Barbara Sloan.

The professional when I joined was Jamal Din, a prominent Indian player who was seeded at the 1960 British Open along with four of the Khan family and Mike Oddy. The first professional squash which I saw was an exhibition between Din and the legendary Hashim Khan in 1959.

In those days the sauna was a drying room. There was a flunky called Hamilton who could be ordered to bring players a drink from the bar.

His main duty was to pick up players' sweaty kits, marked with locker number, hang them in the drying room and then put them away in the

correct old tin locker. The gents dressing room is little changed apart from new wooden lockers and the removal of two modesty cubicles in the showers. When I joined, there was a ladies' toilet where the kitchen now is.

Unfortunately, it was probably used more by men who could not be bothered going downstairs.

Jamal Din was soon succeeded by Haydn Davies as manager/professional. The 1959 ESC Annual report states '*The Club has been fortunate in securing the services of Mr Hadyn Davies as Manager and Professional. The Directors were sorry to have to dispense with the services of General Maczek and Jamal Din, and wish them well in the future.*' Hadyn proved to be a first class coach, and excellent manager, and was a popular

Edinburgh statue will honour Polish war hero General Stanislaw Maczek



The Second World War Commander General Stanislaw Maczek leaving Edinburgh on his 80th birthday.

genial host behind the bar. He left in 1975 after 16 years with the club. During the 1960s, Friday and Saturday evenings were packed because, while pubs then closed at 10.00pm, we had an extension to 10.30, 11.00pm if food was taken. Canapes were duly produced for the purpose. Better still, if Haydn was in the mood, he would tip the wink to his favourites to

hang around after last orders, then we would booze away until around 3.00am, happily driving home afterwards (pre breathalyser days). On one occasion Haydn had just had an early burglar alarm installed which connected to the police. He set the alarm, then walked through the beam himself. Our drunken revellers, driving up the Club hill, were met by police cars charging down. Somehow, we all got away with it.



In my early Board days, Directors' Dinners always took place in a hotel, and were attended by several founder members – The Hon. David Balfour, and Dr King were regulars. There was also a gentleman called Ross (not PB Mackenzie) who I thought was a founder member, but I now think he was not. They were very formal affairs, quite different from now with the recent "smart casual" dress code which I deplore to the extent of refusing to attend. Dr King owned the land, then known as "The Haugh" on which the Club was built, prior to which it was the home of several allotments.

Also, during the 60s, many colourful characters frequented the bar. A notorious regular group comprised: Bronte Fraser, Alan Mackenzie, Henry Ramsden, Bobbie Shaw (Bill Shaw's elder brother) and Stanley Baird (Baird the Bootmaker). They all drank to considerable excess, always Queen Anne whisky. After their sessions, they would (some staggering) go down to the car park, I remember Bronte Fraser reeling around bawling "I can't find my bloody

car". The cars included a couple of Bentleys and at least one Jaguar which, once located, they set off, not for home, but up town for more carousing. Stanley Baird never appeared again at the Club after the introduction of the breathalyser in 1967. Then there was the Fettes College group, Ian Sutcliffe the PTI, George Preston, and my father, only a humble Cricket pro, and several others whose names escape me for the moment. Also, WID Elliott, legendary Scottish forward, an immensely strong man, and his mate, Ewen Cameron, famous field sports athlete. Quieter regulars were me (of course), Betty Acland, Stuart Sloan, Campbell and Rita Mitchell of Mitchells timber merchants (still trading) - Libby, their daughter, is Company Secretary. An amusing story about them was when Campbell acquired a new Jaguar Mark 8. Rita drove him in her Ford Anglia to pick it up and then followed the Jag on their way home. The Jag was an early automatic which Campbell was not used to. Approaching traffic lights in Palmerston Place, Campbell braked too early, rather sharply, and Rita rammed the Jag up the rear with her Anglia. They got out to view the damage rowing furiously when a hapless bystander came up and said to Rita; "I will be your witness madam, that man braked far too fiercely". Rita turned on him and told him to shove off and mind his own business, "that *Man* happens to be my husband".



Another regular, Stuart Sloan (Club Chair 1965-1968) pictured on the right, was a lovely man, formerly Sloan of Sloan's Garage which went bust. He had double DFCs, was a pilot of the King's Flight, and flew the Royal Family in a Viscount, he had several other awards, but he became an alcoholic which I did not know then. We were close friends. He had a secret arrangement with our barmaid, Betty Dixon, that whenever he bought, or was bought a drink, she would make it a double and he secretly paid the difference later. I eventually tumbled to this and told him if he wanted a double, I would gladly buy it. So I did, only to discover later that Betty then doubled the double. Throat cancer got him around 20 years later in 1994, and he died in penury in a council house in Fife. It was very sad; I think he was haunted by one of his acts of bravery. He was a navigator in a Wellington Bomber during a bombing raid on Germany. The plane was virtually shot to pieces, a near total wreck. The Captain had died, and, Stewart, despite having no pilot's training managed to fly the stricken plane with his comrades back to base at High Wycombe. He was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal, which ranks just below the Victoria Cross as the highest award open to NCO's. He never ever spoke about it. He then trained as a pilot to fly the Halifax on thirty bombing operations. More details [here](#) He ended the war as a Flight Lieutenant and relinquished his commission as a Wing commander in 1975. Post war he served with the King's Flight, flying Viscounts. He joined Vickers Armstrong as a test pilot in 1951, flying various types and displaying at the 1953 Farnborough Air Show.

David Hollingdale, August 2020

David Hollingdale article on Table Tennis

If you are doing a piece on table tennis at ESC, I would like Eddie Still to be given centre stage. He was more highly ranked than I, and continued to put a lot back into the game for his entire life as a coach, particularly encouraging youngsters, and establishing table tennis at ESC, getting teams into the league, and continues to support it. I abandoned table tennis in about 1962 having decided to become an international squash player instead, my self-confidence failed to achieve that outcome. At the time of Utrecht, Scottish men were not world class, but the legendary Helen Elliott was a world class woman. An amusing illustration occurred in about 1958 when Helen raised eyebrows by entering the Highland Open at Elgin in both the ladies' singles, but also the open draw, which was not actually called the "Mens' Singles". She walked the ladies' as usual. She also got to the final of the open singles, thrashing the then Scottish male No. 1, Victor Garland, to take the title. Garland was not amused, but the rest of us were. She was at Utrecht as well. She already held two world titles, got to the semi finals of the mixed doubles with Aubrey Simons of England, when, leading 19-12 in the third set, Simons froze, and they lost to Kalman Szepesi and Eva Koczian (both Hungarian). She got to the quarter finals of the ladies singles, losing to the multi titled Angelica Rozeanu. Helen got me into her famous Gambit Club aged 15, and coached me into a reasonable player. I kept in touch with her until her death about five years ago.