

ESC History interview

Philip B Mackenzie Ross (1928)

1. What brought you to squash rackets, and when did you first play?
 - a. Student at Pembroke Cambridge – Chapel built by Christopher Wren, they had their own sports grounds and two squash courts – South African undergraduate invited me to play, and introduced me to the game 1945-46
2. When did you join ESC?
 - a. 26th January 1951 (see Share certificate)
 - b. Who introduced you? – I just asked around a few friends...
3. When did you first and last play at ESC?
 - a. First 1951, last circa 1990 in the Geriatrics (Philip told story about the surgeon who (after Philip had a heart scare) said “Mr Ross, you must now do absolutely no housework, and drink only the finest Bordeaux” (or perhaps other fine red wine)
4. Would you like to provide a timeline of your early life?
 - a. Born 1928
 - b. Prep school - 1933-1939 Rochester House, in the Coates gardens area
 - c. I went with my parents to Toronto, Canada in 1939 to visit an elderly aunt, and were trapped in Canada for the duration of the War. My father didn't like Toronto, so we moved to Vernon, British Columbia (BC), where I went to a local School for two years before being sent as a boarder to Brentwood School in Victoria BC
 - d. We returned to UK after the War, and I went to Pembroke College Cambridge 1945/46 for one year
 - e. Left college for two years – conscription from 1947-49, posted to the RAF at Salisbury, then near Hanover Germany – (just 18 months after the end of the War) in a troopship. I was immediately put into German classes (and have retained much of my German knowledge forever thereafter). The German class was just three of us, very intense, with a test every Wednesday, and if all three passed we were taken to the films! (in German of course, but still a pleasure to escape the camp)
 - f. Two further years at Pembroke 1949-1951, where I earned a degree in Economics and Law
5. What was your business life?
 - a. On returning from Pembroke around 1951, I underwent a CA apprenticeship in Edinburgh until 1956. I was on a committee at Pembroke for a few years later on.
 - b. London working for an Investment Company - Finance for Industry (FFI). FFI was a 1973 initiative by the Bank of England and leading private banks to make funds available to Industry. FI was created in 1987 when the banks sold off their shares to create a PLC.
 - c. Retired around 1990, then had a portfolio of part-time directorships thereafter.
6. Were you a member of other club(s)?
 - a. Lansdowne London – staying South Kensington (sharing with two others) while working in the City for an Investment Company (Finance for Industry). I was a Lansdowne Club team player – introduced by Bill Shaw
7. What about your family?
 - a. My father was a golf course designer, and the family followed him round some of his work.
 - i. Estoril 1936 – by ship with mother - aged 8 during holidays from Rochester House preparatory School, Coates Gardens.
 - ii. Southernness 1946 stayed in cottage near the village
 - iii. Turnberry 1949-1951 – house at Turnberry – walking with him occasionally
 - b. Son and Daughter, both in England. Daughter is a Clinical psychologist, and lives in Surrey, while son is in the hotel trade and lives in Yorkshire with his wife and young children.
 - c. My Sister still lives in Edinburgh.

- d. My wife Mary and I live in Barnton. We married on October 30th 1998, both of us having been widowed some years before.
8. Who were among your most regular opponents?
 - a. Roy Cowper. We first played when around 1963, I was 35, and he 19 (having played rugby exclusively until then). He was representing another club (possibly Dick Vet – Roy recollects Hamish Fordwood involving him there), and I was drawn to play him in a match – the rest is history.
 - b. Geriatrics. I played doubles squash and tennis with this group for over 40 years
9. Best sporting achievement
 - a. Playing regularly for ESC, not always for the firsts.
10. What did ESC bring to your life?
 - a. Opponents e. g. R.J.A. Cowper
 - b. Excellent Social life
11. Are you happy with the progress the club is making, e.g. Padel, Table Tennis installations, and refurbishment in general?
 - a. I don't get down to the club much now – Roy and Alastair took me there and back until 2019, but I read the newsletters and am pleased to see the extent of the participation, also the Padel court facility.
12. Do you have any photographs, memorabilia or other records from ESC?
 - a. I've already provided my share certificate, dated 26th January 1951
13. Other information
 - a. Philip was on the Board from 1969 until 1973, and Chairman from 1972 to 1973
 - b. Philip was awarded a certificate on 26th January 2021, the day on which he celebrated 70 years as a Club member.